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SHAKSPEARE

AND

HIS TIMES:

INCLUDING

THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET;

CRITICISMS ON HIS GENIUS AND WRITINGS; A NEW CHRONOLOGY OF HIS PLAYS;

A DISQUISITION ON THE OBJECT OF HIS SONNETS;

AND

A HISTORY OF

THE MANNERS, CUSTOMS, AND AMUSEMENTS, SUPERSTITIONS,

POETRY, AND ELEGANT LITERATURE OF HIS AGE.

By NATHAN DRAKE, M.D.

AUTHOR OF "LITERARY HOURS," AND OF "ESSAYS ON PERIODICAL LITERATURE."

— On the tip of his subduing tongue
All kind of arguments and question deep,
All replication prompt, and reason strong,
For his advantage still did wake and sleep:
To make the weeper laugh, the laughter weep,
He had the dialect and different skill,
Catching all passions in his craft of will;
That he did in the general bosom reign
Of young, of old; and sexes both enchanted.

The very age and body of the time, his form and pressure.
SHAKSPEARE.

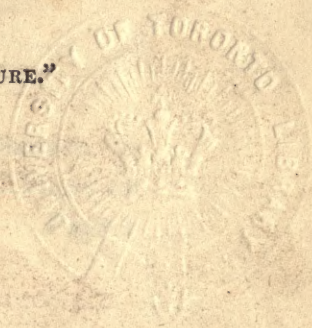
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

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1817.



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SHAKSPEARE

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HIS TIMES:

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CRITICISMS ON HIS GENIUS AND WRITINGS; A NEW CHRONOLOGY OF HIS PLAYS;

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AND

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THE MANNERS, CUSTOMS, AND AMUSEMENTS OF HIS AGE.

POETRY, AND ELEGANT LITERATURE OF HIS AGE.

By J. A. D. M. D. M. D.

AND OF A HISTORY OF THE POETICAL LITERATURE

— On the use of his English tongue
All kind of words and phrases used
All kind of words and phrases used
For his subjects and did also use
To make the words plain, the language
He had the dialect and different style
To make all questions in the world of words
The old did in the world of words
Of words, of style, and accents both combined.

The very old and body of the time, his form and nature

VOL. II.

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SHAKSPEARE AND HIS TIMES.

PART II.

SHAKSPEARE IN LONDON.

CHAPTER V.

DEDICATIONS OF SHAKSPEARE'S VENUS AND ADONIS AND RAPE OF LUCRECE TO THE EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON — BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE EARL — CRITIQUE ON THE POEMS OF SHAKSPEARE.

SHAKSPEARE'S dedication of his *Venus and Adonis* to the Earl of Southampton, in 1593; the accomplishments, the liberality, and the virtues of this amiable nobleman, and the substantial patronage which, according to tradition, he bestowed upon our poet, together claim for him, in this place, a more than cursory notice as to life and character.

Thomas Wriothesly, Earl of Southampton, and Baron of Titchfield, was born on the sixth of October, 1573. His grandfather had been created an Earl in the reign of Henry the Eighth; and his father, who married Mary, the daughter of Anthony, first Viscount of Montague, was a strenuous supporter of the rights of Mary Queen of Scots. Just previous to the completion of his eighth year, he suffered an irreparable loss by the death of his father, on the 4th of October, 1581. His mother, however, appears to have been by no means negligent of his education; for he was early sent to Cambridge, being matri-

culated there when only twelve years old, on the 11th of December, 1585. He was admitted of St. John's College, where, on the 6th of June, 1589, he took his degree of Master of Arts, and, after a residence of nearly five years in the University, he finally left it for Town, to complete his course of studies at Gray's Inn, of which place, in June, 1590, he had entered himself a member.

The circumstances which, so shortly after Lord Southampton's arrival in London, induced Shakspeare to select him as his patron, may, with an assurance almost amounting to certainty, be ascribed to the following event. Not long after the death of her husband, Lady Southampton married Sir Thomas Heneage, treasurer of the chamber, an office which necessarily led him into connection with actors and dramatic writers. Of this intercourse Lord Southampton, at the age of seventeen, was very willing to avail himself, and his subsequent history evinces, that, throughout life, he retained a passionate attachment to dramatic exhibitions. No stronger proof, indeed, can be given of his love for the theatre, than what an anecdote related by Rowland Whyte affords us, who, in a letter to Sir Robert Sydney, dated October 11th, 1599, tells his correspondent, that "my Lord Southampton and Lord Rutland come not to the Court (at Nonesuch). The one doth but very seldome. They pass away the tyme in London *merely in going to plaies* EVERY DAY." *

To a young nobleman thus inclined, imbued with a keen relish for dramatic poetry, who was ardent in his thirst for fame, and liberal in the encouragement of genius, it was natural for our poet to look not only with hope and expectation, but with enthusiastic regard. To Lord Southampton, therefore, though only nineteen years old, Shakspeare, in his twenty-ninth year†, dedicated his *Venus and Adonis*, "the first heire of *his* invention."

* Sydney Papers, vol. ii. p. 132.

† *Venus and Adonis* was entered on the Stationers' Books, by Richard Field, April 18. 1593, six days before its author completed the twenty-ninth year of his age.

The language of this dedication, however, indicates some degree of apprehension as to the nature of its reception, and consequently proves that our author was not at this period assured of His Lordship's support; for it commences thus:—"Right Honorable, I know not how I shall *offend* in dedicating my unpolisht lines to your Lordship;" and he adds in the opening of the next clause, "onely if your Honor *seeme but pleased*, I account myselfe highly praised." These timidities appear to have vanished in a very short period: for our author's dedication to the same nobleman of his *Rape of Lucrece*, which was entered on the Stationers' Books on May 9th, 1594, and published almost immediately afterwards, speaks a very different language, and indicates very plainly that Shakspeare had already experienced the beneficial effects of His Lordship's patronage. Gratitude and confidence, indeed, cannot express themselves in clearer terms than may be found in the diction of this address:—"The *love* I dedicate to Your Lordship," says the bard, "*is without end*. — The *warrant* I have of your *Honourable disposition*, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it *assured of acceptance*. What I have done is yours, what I have to doe is yours, being part in *all* I have devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duety would shew greater; meane time, as it is, *it is bound to your Lordship*." Words more declaratory of obligation it would not be easy to select, and we shall be justified, therefore, in inferring, that Lord Southampton had conferred upon Shakspeare, in consequence of his dedication to him of *Venus and Adonis*, some marked proof of his kindness and protection.

Tradition has recorded, among other instances of this nobleman's pecuniary bounty, that he, at one time, gave Shakspeare a thousand pounds, in order to complete a purchase, a sum which in these days would be equal in value to more than five times its original amount. *

* "There is one instance," says Rowe, who first mentioned the anecdote, "so singular in the magnificence of this patron of Shakspeare's, that if I had not been assured that the story was handed down by Sir William Davenant, who was probably very well acquainted

This may be, and probably is, an exaggeration ; but that it has been founded on the *well-known* liberality of Lord Southampton to Shakspeare ; on a certain knowledge that donations had passed from the peer to the poet, there can be little doubt. It had become the custom of the age to reward dedication by pecuniary bounty, and that Lord Southampton was diffusively and peculiarly generous in this mode of remuneration, we have the express testimony of Florio, who, dedicating his *World of Words* to this nobleman in 1598, says :— “ In truth, I acknowledge an entire debt, not only of my best knowledge, but of all ; yea of more than I know, or can to your bounteous lordship, *in whose pay and patronage I have lived some years* ; to whom I owe and vowe the years I have to live. But, as to me, *and many more*, the glorious and gracious sunshine of your honour hath infused light and life.” Here, if we except the direct confession relative to “ *pay*,” the language is similar to, and not more emphatically expressive of gratitude than was Shakspeare’s ; and that, under the phrase “ *many more*,” Florio meant to include our poet, we may, without scruple, infer. To an actor, to a rising dramatic writer, to one who had placed the first fruits of his genius under his protection, and who was still contending with the difficulties incident to his situation, the taste, the generosity, and the feeling of Lord Southampton, would naturally be attracted ; and the donation which, in all probability, followed the dedication of *Venus and Adonis*, we have reason, from the voice of tradition, to conclude, was succeeded by many, and still more important, proofs of His Lordship’s favour.

The patronage of literature, however, was not the only inclination which, at this early period of life, His Lordship cultivated with enthusiasm ; the year subsequent to his receival of Shakspeare’s dedication of *The Rape of Lucrece*, saw him entangled in all the perplexities of

with his affairs, I should not have ventured to have inserted ; that my Lord Southampton at ~~the~~ time gave him a thousand pounds, to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to. A bounty very great, and very rare at any time.” — Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 67.

love, and the devoted slave of *the faire Mrs. Varnon*. Of this attachment, which was thwarted by the caprice of Elizabeth, Rowland Whyte, in a letter to Sir Henry Sydney, dated September 23rd, 1595, writes in the following terms:—"My Lord Southampton doth with too much familiarity court the faire Mrs. Varnon, while his friends, observing the Queen's humours towards my Lord of Essex, do what they can to bring her to favour him; but it is yet in vain." * This young lady, Elizabeth Vernon, was the cousin of the celebrated Earl of Essex, between whom and Southampton differences had arisen, which this passion for his fair relative dissipated for ever. †

Yet the fascinations of love could not long restrain the ardent spirit of Lord Southampton. In 1597, when Lord Essex was appointed General of the forces destined to act against the Azores, Southampton, at the age of twenty-four, gallantly came forward as a volunteer, on board the *Garland*, one of Her Majesty's best ships,—an offer which was soon followed by a commission from Essex to command her. An opportunity speedily occurred for the display of his courage; in an engagement with the Spanish fleet, he pursued and sunk one of the enemy's largest men of war, and was wounded in the arm, during the conflict. ‡ Sir William Monson, one of the Admirals of the expedition, tells us, that the Earl lost time in this chase, which might have been better employed §; but his friend Essex appears to have considered his conduct in a different light, and conferred upon him, during his voyage, the honour of knighthood.

* Sydney Papers, vol. i. p. 348.

† "There were present, at this Council, the Earl of Southampton, with whom, in former times, he (Essex) had been at some *emulations*, and *differences*, at Court: But, after, Southampton, having married his Kinswoman, plunged himself wholly into his fortune," &c. Declaration of the Treason of the Earl of Essex, sign. D. quoted by Mr. Chalmers, Supplement. Apology, p. 110.

‡ Rowland Whyte informs us, that "Lord Southampton fought with one of the king's great men of war, and sunk her." Sydney Papers, vol. ii. p. 72; but Sir William Monson calls this man of war "a frigate of the Spanish fleet."

§ Account of the Wars with Spain, p. 38.

On his return to England, in October, 1597, he had the misfortune to find that the Queen had embraced the opinion of Monson, rather than that of Essex, and frowned with displeasure on the officer who had presumed to pursue and sink a Spanish vessel, without orders from his commander; a censure which was intended also to reach the General, with whom she was justly offended for having assumed the direction of a service to which his judgment and his talents were inadequate.

Nor was the immediately subsequent conduct of Southampton in the least degree calculated to appease the anger of Elizabeth; he renewed his proposals of marriage, and again without consulting her wishes; he quarrelled with, and challenged the Earl of Northumberland, and compelled her to issue a mandate in order to prevent their meeting; and one evening, being engaged at play, in the presence-chamber, with Raleigh and some other courtiers, they protracted their amusement beyond the hour of the Queen's retirement to rest; and being warned by Willoughby, the officer in waiting, to depart, Raleigh obeyed, but Southampton, indignant and easily irritated, refused compliance, and, warm language ensuing, he struck Willoughby, who was not backward in returning the blow. When the Queen, the next morning, was apprised of this disgraceful scuffle, she applauded Willoughby for his spirited conduct, adding, that "he had better have sent Southampton to the porter's lodge, to see who durst have fetched him out." *

This heedless and intemperate ebullition of passion, the result of youth and inexperience, was atoned for by many sterling virtues of the head and heart; and the career of dissipation was fortunately interrupted by His Lordship's attention to his duty as a senator in the first place, and, secondly, by an engagement to accompany Mr. Secretary Cecil on an embassy to Paris. His introduction to parliamentary business began on the 24th of October, 1597, and ter-

* Sydney Papers, vol. ii. p. 83.

minated, with the session, on the 8th of February 1598; and two days afterwards, he left London to commence his tour.

Previous to his quitting the capital, he, and his friends, Cobham and Raleigh, thought it necessary to entertain his future fellow-traveller; and, on this occasion, Southampton had recourse to his favourite amusement, the drama; for it is recorded that they "severally feasted Mr. Secretary, before his departure; and had *plaies*, and banquets." * The bare mention of this excursion, however, had afforded extreme grief to the fair object of his affections, who "passed her time in weeping †;" and, in order to obviate the apprehended consequences of his absence, and consequently her sorrow, it had been secretly proposed that Lord Southampton should marry his mistress before his departure. ‡ Circumstances having prevented the accomplishment of this plan, we are not surprised to learn that when His Lordship departed, on the 10th of February 1598, he left "behind him a most desolate gentlewoman, that almost wept out her fairest eyes." §

The travellers reached Paris on the 1st of March 1598, and on the 17th of the same month, Cecil introduced his friend, at Angers, to that illustrious monarch Henry the Fourth, telling His Majesty, that Lord Southampton "was come with deliberation to do him service." Henry received the Earl most graciously, and embraced him with many expressions of regard; and, had not the peace of Vervins intervened, His Lordship would have ardently seized the opportunity of serving the ensuing campaign under a general of such unrivalled reputation.

In the course of November 1598, there is reason to suppose that this enterprising nobleman returned to London ||; soon after which event, his union with Elizabeth Vernon took place. His bride was

* Sydney Papers, vol. ii. p. 87. † Ibid., p. 81. ‡ Ibid., p. 88.

§ Ibid., p. 90.

|| In a letter, dated November 2nd, 1598, Rowland Whyte says, that Lord Southampton is about to return to England. Sydney Papers, vol. ii. p. 104.

the daughter of John Vernon of Hodnet, in the county of Salop, and she appears to have possessed a large share of personal charms. A portrait of her was drawn by Cornelius Jansen, which is said to have "the face and hands coloured with incomparable lustre." * The unjustifiable resentment of the Queen, however, rendered this connection, for a time, a source of much misery to both parties. Her capricious tyranny was such, as to induce her to feel offended, if any of her courtiers had the audacity to love or marry without her knowledge or permission; and the result of what she termed His Lordship's clandestine marriage, was the instant dismissal of himself and his lady to a prison. How long their confinement was protracted, cannot now be accurately ascertained; that it was long in the opinion of the Earl of Essex, appears from an address of his to the Lords of Council, in which he puts the following interrogation:—"Was it treason in my Lord of Southampton to marry my poor kinswoman, that neither *long* imprisonment, nor any punishment besides, that hath been usual, in like cases, can satisfy, or appease †?" But we do know that it could not have existed beyond March, 1599; for on the 27th of that month, Lord Southampton accompanied his friend Essex to Ireland, where, immediately on his arrival, he was appointed by the Earl, now Lord Deputy of that country, his general of the horse.

This military promotion of Southampton is one among numerous proofs of the imprudence of Essex, for it was not only without the Queen's knowledge, but, as Camden has informed us, "clean contrary to his instructions." ‡ What was naturally to be expected, therefore, soon occurred; Lord Southampton was, by the Queen's orders, deprived of his commission, in the August following, and on the 20th of September, 1599, he revisited London, where, apprehensive of the

* Imperfect Hints towards a New Edition of Shakspeare, 4to. Part II., Advertisement, p. xxi.

† Birch's Memoirs, vol. ii. p. 422.

‡ Kennet's History of England, vol. ii. p. 614.

displeasure of Her Majesty, he absented himself from court, and endeavoured to soothe his inquietude by the attractions of the theatre, to which his ardent admiration of the genius of Shakspeare now daily induced him to recur.

The resentment of the Queen, however, though not altogether appeased, soon began to subside; and in December 1599, when Lord Mountjoy was commissioned to supersede Essex in the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland, Lord Southampton was one of the officers selected by Her Majesty to attend him. Farther than this she refused to condescend; for, though His Lordship solicited for some weeks the honour of kissing her hand, and was supported in this request by the influence of Cecil, he solicited in vain, and was at length compelled to rest satisfied with the expression of her wishes for the safety of his journey.

One unpleasant consequence of his former transient campaign in Ireland, had been a quarrel with the Lord Grey, who acting under him as a colonel of horse had, from the impetuosity of youthful valour, attacked the rebel force without orders; a contempt of subordination which had been punished by his superior with a night's imprisonment.* The fiery spirit of Grey could not brook even this requisite attention to discipline, and he sent Southampton a challenge, which the latter, on his departure for Ireland, in April 1600, accepted, by declaring, that he would meet Lord Grey in any part of that country. The Queen, however, for the present arrested the combat; but the animosity was imbibed by delay, and Lord Southampton felt it necessary to his character to break off his military engagements, which had conferred upon him the reputation of great bravery and professional skill, and had received the marked approval of the Lord Deputy, to satiate the resentment of Grey, who had again called him to a meeting, and fixed its scene in the Low Countries.

Of this interview we know nothing more than that it proved so completely abortive, that, shortly afterwards, Lord Grey attacked

* Vide Harrington's *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. ii. p. 33.

Southampton as he rode through the streets of London, an outrage which affords but a melancholy trait of the manners of the age, though punished on the spot by the immediate committal of the perpetrator to prison.

It had been happy, however, for the fame and repose of Southampton, had this been the only unfortunate contest in which he engaged ; but he was recalled by Essex from the Low Countries, in order to assist him in his insurrectionary movements against the person and government of his sovereign. Blinded by the attachments of friendship, which he cultivated with enthusiastic warmth, and indignant at the treatment which he had lately received from the Queen, he too readily listened to the treasonable suggestions of Essex, and became one of the conspirators who assembled at the house of this nobleman on the 8th of February 1601. Here they took the decisive step of imprisoning the Queen's privy counsellors who had been sent to enquire into the purport of their meeting, and from this mansion they sallied forth, with the view of exciting the citizens to rebellion. An enterprise so criminal, so rash, and chimerical, immediately met the fate which it merited ; and the trial of Essex and Southampton for high treason took place on the 19th of February, when, both being found guilty, the former, as is well known, expiated his offence by death, while the latter, from the minor culpability of his views, from the modesty and contrition which he exhibited in his defence, and from the intercession of Cecil and the peers, obtained a remission of the sentence affecting his life, but was condemned to imprisonment in the Tower.

We have more than once mentioned the great partiality of Lord Southampton to dramatic literature, and it is somewhat remarkable that this partiality should have been rendered subservient to the machinations of treason ; for Bacon tells us, that “ the afternoon before the rebellion, Merick, (afterwards the defender of Essex-house,) with a great company of others, that afterwards were all in the action, had procured to be played before them the play of deposing *King Richard the Second* ;—when it was told him by one of the

players that the play was *old*, and they should have loss in playing it, because few would come to it, there were forty shillings extraordinary given to play it, and so thereupon played it was."* It appears from the State Trials, vol. vii. p. 60., that the player to whom the forty shillings were given, was Augustine Philippes, one of the patentees of the Globe playhouse with Shakspeare, in 1603.

The term *old* applied to this play, which, according to the report of the Queen, "was played forty times in open streets and houses†," has induced Dr. Farmer and Mr. Tyrwhitt to conclude that a play entitled *Richard the Second*, or *Henry the Fourth*, existed before Shakspeare's dramas on these subjects. This position, however, is dissented from by Mr. Chalmers, who says,—“In opposition to Farmer and Tyrwhitt, I hold, though I have a great respect for their memories, that it was illogical to argue, from a nonentity, against an entity; that as no such play as the *Henry IV.* which they spoke of had ever appeared, while Shakspeare's *Richard II.* was apparent to every eye, it was inconsequential reasoning in them to prefer the first play to the last: and I am, therefore, of opinion, that *the play of deposing Richard II.* which was seditiously played on the 7th of February 1600-1, was Shakspeare's *Richard II.*, that had been originally acted in 1596, and first printed in 1597.”‡

This opinion of Mr. Chalmers will be much strengthened when we reflect that Lord Southampton's well-known attachment to the muse of Shakspeare, would almost certainly induce him to prefer the play written by his favourite poet to the composition of an obscure, and, without doubt, a very inferior writer.

The death of Elizabeth terminated the confinement and the sufferings of Lord Southampton. No sooner had James acceded to the throne, than he sent an order for his release from the Tower, which took place on the 10th of April, 1603, and accompanied it with a

* Bacon's Works, Mallet's edit. vol. iv. p. 412.

† Vide Queen Elizabeth's Progresses, by Nichols, vol. ii. p. 1.

‡ Chalmers's Supplemental Apology, p. 311, 312.

request that he would meet him on his way to England. This might be considered as a certain presage of future favours, and was, indeed, speedily followed, not only by the reversal of his attainder, and the restoration of his property, but by an accumulation of honours. He was immediately appointed master of the game to the Queen; a pension of six hundred pounds per annum was allotted to his lady; in July, 1603, he was installed a knight of the garter, and created captain of Isle of Wight and of Carisbrooke Castle, and in the following Spring he was constituted Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, and was chosen by the King as his companion in a journey to Royston.

This flow of good fortune was, however, transiently impeded by the jealousy of James, who, stimulated by the machinations of some of his courtiers, envious of the returning prosperity of the Earl*, was led to suspect that an improper intimacy had taken place between Southampton and his Queen; a charge of disaffection to His Majesty was, therefore, brought against His Lordship, and he was apprehended towards the close of June, 1604; but not the smallest proof of his disloyalty having been substantiated, he was immediately released, and as immediately retaken into favour.

Of his perfect reinstatement, indeed, in the affections of James we possess a decided proof. Rowland Whyte, writing to Lord Shrewsbury, on the 4th of March, 1604, says,—“ My La. Southampton was brought to bed of a young Lord upon St. David’s Day (March 1st) in the morning; a St. to be much honored by that howse for so great a blessing, by wearing a leeke for ever upon that day.”† Now this child was christened at court on the 27th of the same month, “ the King, and Lord Cranburn, with the Countess of Suffolk, being

* Wilson tells us, that “ the Earl of Southampton, covered long with the *Ashes* of great Essex his *Ruins*, was sent for from the Tower, and the King lookt upon him with a smiling *countenance*, though displeasing happily to the new Baron *Essington*, Sir *Robert Cecil*, yet it was much more to the Lords *Cobham* and *Grey*, and Sir *Walter Rawleigh*.” — History of Great Britain, folio, 1653, p. 4.

† Lodge’s Illustrations of British History, vol. iii. p. 270.

gossips *;" an honour which was followed, in June, 1606, by a more substantial mark of regard, the appointment of His Lordship to be Warden of the New Forest, and Keeper of the Park of Lindhurst.

In November, 1607, Lord Southampton lost his mother, who had been wife successively to Henry Wriothesly Earl of Southampton, to Sir Thomas Heneage, and to Sir William Hervey. We are told by Lord Arundel that she "*lefte the best of her stuffe to her sonne, and the greatest part to her husband †;*" this bequest, however, could not have been very ample, for it did not obviate the necessity of her son's applying, shortly afterwards, to trade and colonisation with the view of increasing his property. In 1609, he was constituted a member of the first Virginia Company, took a most active part in their concerns, and was the chief promoter of the different voyages to America, which were undertaken as well for the purposes of discovery as for private interest.

The warmth of temper which distinguished Lord Southampton in early life, seems not to have been adequately repressed by time and experience; he was ever prone to resentment, though not difficult to conciliate, and, unhappily, the manners of the age were not such as to impose due restraint on the tumultuary passions. A quarrel with Lord Montgomery, on a trifling occasion, which occurred in April, 1610, is but too striking an illustration of these remarks; "*they fell out at tennis,*" relates Winwood, "*where the rackets flew about their ears, but the matter was compounded by the King, without further bloodshed ‡;*" a passage, the close of which proves that they had fought and wounded each other with the instruments of their amusement!

We speedily recognise Lord Southampton, however, acting in a manner more suitable to his station and character; on the 4th of June, 1610, he officiated as carver at the magnificent festival which

* Winwood's Memorials, vol. iii. p. 54.

† Lodge's Illustrations, vol. iii. p. 331.

‡ Winwood's Memorials, vol. iii. p. 154.

was given in honour of young Henry's assumption of the title of Prince of Wales; and in July, 1613, we find His Lordship entertaining the King at his house in the New Forest, whither he had returned from an expedition to the continent, expressly for this purpose, and under the expectation of receiving a royal visit. After discharging this duty to his sovereign, he again left his native country, and was present, in the following year, with Lord Herbert of Cherbury, at the siege of Rees, in the dutchy of Cleve.

It was at this period that his reputation as a patron of literature, attained its highest celebrity, and it is greatly to be desired that tradition had enabled us to dwell more minutely on his intercourse with the learned. His bounty to, and encouragement of, Shakspeare have conferred immortality on his name; to Florio, we have seen, he extended a durable and efficient support; Brathwayt, in his dedication of his "Scholar's Medley," 1614, calls him "learnings best favourite;" and in 1617, he contributed very liberally to relieve the distresses of Minsheu, the author of "The Guide to Tongues." Doubtless, had we more ample materials for his life, these had not been the only instances of his munificence to literary talent.

Still further promotion awaited this accomplished nobleman. When James visited Scotland, in 1617, he accompanied his sovereign, and rendered himself so acceptable by his courtesy and care, that, on the 19th of April, 1619, he was rewarded by the confidential situation of a privy-counsellor, an honour which he had long anxiously held in view.

This completion of his wishes, however, was not attended with the result which he had so sanguinely expected. He found himself unable, from principle, to join in the measures of the court, and the opposition which he now commenced against the King and his ministers, had, in a mind so ardent, a natural tendency to excess. In 1620, and the two following years, he was chosen, contrary to the wishes of government, treasurer of the Virginia Company, an office of great weight and responsibility, but to which his zeal and activity in forwarding the views of that corporation gave him a just

claim. Such, indeed, was the sense which the company entertained of his merits, that his name was annexed to several important parts of Virginia; as, for instance, Southampton-hundred, Hampton-roads, &c.

Whilst he opposed the court merely in its commercial arrangements, no personal inconvenience attended his exertions; but when, in the session of parliament which took place towards the commencement of the year 1621, he deemed it necessary to withstand the unconstitutional views of ministers, he immediately felt the arm of power. He had introduced with success a motion against illegal patents; and during the sitting of the 14th of March, so sharp an altercation occurred between himself and the Marquis of Buckingham, that the interference of the Prince of Wales was necessary to appease the anger of the disputants.

This stormy discussion, and His Lordship's junction with the popular party, occasioned so much suspicion on the part of government, that on the 16th of June, twelve days after the prorogation of parliament, he was committed to the custody of the Dean of Westminster; nor was it until the 18th of the subsequent July, that he was permitted to return to his house at Titchfield, under a partial restraint, nor until the first of September, that he was entirely liberated.

Unawed, however, by this unmerited persecution, and supported by a numerous and respectable party, justly offended at the King's pusillanimity in tamely witnessing his son-in-law's deprivation of the Palatinate, he came forward, with augmented activity, in the parliament of 1624, which opened on the 9th of February. Here he sat on several committees; and when James, on the 5th of the June following, found himself compelled to relinquish his pacific system, and to enter into a treaty with the States-General, granting them permission to raise four regiments in this country, he, unfortunately for himself and his son, procured the colonelcy of one of them.*

* "This Spring," relates Wilson, "gave birth to four brave Regiments of foot (a new apparition in the English horizon) fifteen hundred in a regiment, which were raised, and

Being under the necessity of taking up their winter-quarters at Rosendale in Holland, the Earl, and his eldest son Lord Wriothesly, were seized with a burning fever; "the violence of which distemper," says Wilson, "wrought most vigorously upon the heat of youth, overcoming the son first, and the drooping father, having overcome the fever, departed from Rosendale with an intention to bring his sons body to England; but at Bergen-op-zoom he died of a lethargy in the view and presence of the *Relator*, and were both in one small bark brought to Southampton."* The son expired on the 5th of November, and his parent on the tenth, and they were both buried in the sepulchre of their fathers at Titchfield, on Innocents' day, 1624.

Thus perished, in the fifty-second year of his age, Henry Earl of Southampton, leaving a widow, and three daughters, who, from a letter preserved in the Cabala, appear to have been in confined circumstances; this epistle is from the Lord Keeper Williams to the Duke of Buckingham, dated Nov. 7th, 1624, and requesting of that nobleman "his grace and goodness towards the most distressed widow and children of my Lord Southampton."†

If we except a constitutional warmth and irritability of temper, and their too common result, an occasional error of judgment, there did not exist, throughout the reigns of Elizabeth and James, a character more truly amiable, great, and good than was that of Lord Southampton. To have secured, indeed, the reverence and affection of Shakspeare, was of itself a sufficient passport to the purest fame; but the love and admiration which attended him was general. As a soldier, he was brave, open, and magnanimous; as a statesman remarkable for integrity and independence of mind, and perhaps no

transported into Holland, under four gallant Collonells; the Earl of Oxford, the Earl of Southampton, the Earl of Essex, and the Lord Willoughby, since Earl of Lindsey."—*History of Great Britain*, p. 280.

* *History of Great Britain*, p. 284.

† *Cabala*, p. 299.

individual of his age was a more enthusiastic lover, or a more munificent patron, of arts and literature.

The virtues of his private life, as well as these features of his public character, rest upon the authority of those who best knew him. To the "noble" and "honourable disposition," ascribed to him by Shakspeare, who affectionately declares, that he loves him "without end," we can add the respectable testimony of Chapman, Sir John Beaumont, and Wither, all intimately acquainted with him, and the second his particular friend.

Chapman, in one of his dedicatory sonnets, prefixed to his version of the Iliad, not only applies to him the epithet "learned," but declares him to be the "choice of all our country's noblest spirits *;" and Beaumont, in an Elegy on his death, tells us that his ambition was to draw

" A picture fit for this my noble friend,
That his dear name may not in silence die."

* When Richard Brathwaite dedicated his "Survey of History, or a Nursery for Gentry," to Lord Southampton, he terms him "Learning's select Favourite." Vide *Restituta*, vol. iii. p. 340.—Nash, dedicating his "Life of Jacke Wilton," 1594, to the same nobleman, calls him "a dere lover and cherisher, as well of the Lovers of Poets, as of Poets themselves;" and he emphatically adds,—"Incomprehensible is the height of your spirit, both in heroical resolution and matters of conceit. Unrepeivably perished that booke whatsoever to wast paper, which on the diamond rocke of your judgement disasterly chanceth to be shipwrackt." Jarvis Markham also addresses our English Mæcenas in a similar style, commencing a Sonnet prefixed to his "Most honorable Tragedie of Richard Grenvile, Knt." in the following manner:—

" Thou glorious Laurell of the Muses' hill;
Whose eyes doth crowne the most victorious pen:
Bright Lampe of Vertue, in whose sacred skill
Lives all the blisse of eares-inchaunting men:"

and closes it with declaring, that if His Lordship would vouchsafe to approve his Muse, immortality would be the result:—

" So shall my tragick layes be blest by thee,
And from thy lips suck their eternitie."

Restituta, vol. iii. pp. 410, 414.

In a beautiful strain of enthusiasm, he informs us, that his verses are calculated for posterity, and

“ not for the present age ;
For what man lives, or breathes on England's stage,
That knew not brave Southampton, in whose sight
Most plac'd their day, and in his absence night ? ”

He then proceeds to sketch his character at the different periods of his life :—

“ When he was young, no ornament of youth
Was wanting in him ; ”

and, in manhood, he shone

“ As best in martial deedes and courtly sports ; ”

until riper age, and the cares of the world, having begun to shade his head with silver hairs,

“ His valiant fervour was not then decaide,
But joyn'd with counsell, as a further aide. ”

After this eulogium on the more ostensible features of his life, which terminates with the assertion, that

“ No pow'r, no strong persuasion could him draw
From that, which he conceiv'd as right and law, ”

he presents a most pleasing delineation of his domestic conduct and enjoyments :—

“ When shall we in this realme a father finde
So truly sweet, or husband halfe so kinde ?
Thus he enjoyde the best contents of life,
Obedient children, and a loving wife :
These were his parts in peace : ”

and concludes with celebrating his love of letters and of literary men :—

“ I keepe that glory last, which is the best,
The love of learning, which he oft exprest

By conversation, and respect to those
Who had a name in artes, in verse or prose." *

Wither seems to have been equally impressed with the estimable character of Lord Southampton, and to have meditated a record of his life and virtues; for, in an epigram addressed to him, with a copy of his "Abuses Stript and Whipt," he exclaims,

"I ought to be no stranger to thy worth,
Nor let thy virtues in oblivion sleep:
Nor will I, if my fortunes give me time." †

In short, to adopt the language of an enthusiastic admirer of our dramatic bard, "Southampton died as he had lived, with a mind untainted: embalmed with the tears of every friend to virtue, and to splendid accomplishments: all who knew him, *wished to him long life, still lengthened with all happiness.*" ‡

That a nobleman so highly gifted, most amiable by his virtues, and most respectable by his talents and his taste, should have been strongly attached to Shakspeare, and this attachment returned by the poet with equal fervour, cannot excite much surprise; indeed, that more than pecuniary obligation was the tie that connected Shakspeare with his patron, must appear from the tone of his dedications, especially from that prefixed to the "Rape of Lucrece," which

* Beaumont's Poems. Chalmers's English Poets, vol. vi. p. 42.

† Several other tributes to the memory and virtues of Southampton are on record. Daniel has one, commemorating his fortitude, when under sentence of death, and the Rev. William Jones published, in 1625, a Sermon on his decease, preached before the Countess; to which he added, "The Teares of the Isle of Wight, shed on the tombe of their most noble, valorous, and loving Captaine and Governour, the right Honourable Henrie, Earle of Southampton," containing an Elegy on the father and son written by himself; "an Episode upon the death" of Lord Southampton, by Fra. Beale Esqr.; fifteen short pieces of poetry, called "certain touches upon the life and death of the Right Honourable Henrie, Earle of Southampton," by W. Pettie, and another poem on the same subject by Ar. Price.

‡ Imperfect Hints towards a New Edition of Shakspeare, Part II. p. 6. 4to. 1788.

breathes an air of affectionate friendship, and respectful familiarity. * We should also recollect, that, according to tradition, the great pecuniary obligation of Shakspeare to his patron, was much posterior to the period of these dedications, being given for the purpose of enabling the poet to make a purchase at his native town of Stratford, a short time previous to his retirement thither.

It may, therefore, with safety be concluded, that admiration and esteem were the chief motives which actuated Shakspeare in all the stages of his intercourse with Lord Southampton, to whom, in 1593, we have found he dedicated the "first heir of his invention."

Our reasons for believing that this poem was written in the interval which occurred between the years 1587 and 1590, have been already given in a former part of the work †, and we shall here, therefore, only transcribe the title page of the original edition, which, though entered in the Stationers' books by Richard Field, on the 18th of April, 1593, was supposed not to have been published before 1594, until Mr. Malone had the good fortune to procure a copy from a provincial catalogue, perhaps the only one remaining in existence ‡ :—

" VENUS AND ADONIS.

Vilia miretur Vulgus, mihi flavus Apollo,
Pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua.

London. By Richard Field, and are to be solde at the Signe of the White Greyhound, in Paules Church Yard. 1593."

* A similar impression seems to have arisen in the mind of the ingenious author of the "Imperfect Hints," who, after selecting the parting scene between Bassanio and Anthonio in the *Merchant of Venice*, as the subject of a picture, remarks, that "this noble spirit of friendship *might* have been realized, when my lord Southampton (the dear and generous friend of Shakspeare) embarked for the seige of Rees in the Dutchy of Cleve." — *Imperfect Hints*, Part I. p. 35.

† See Part II. chap. ii.

‡ "Mr. Malone," relates Mr. Beloe, "had long been in search of this edition, and when he was about to give up all hope of possessing it, he obtained a copy from a provincial catalogue. But he still did not procure it till after a long and tedious negotiation, and a most enormous price."—*Anecdotes of Literature*, vol. i. p. 363.

This, the earliest offspring of our poet's prolific genius, consists of one hundred and ninety-nine stanzas, each stanza including six lines, of which the first four are in alternate rhyme, and the fifth and sixth form a couplet. Its length, indeed, is one of its principal defects; for it has led, not only to a fatiguing circumlocution, in point of language, but it has occasioned the poet frequently to expand his imagery into a diffuseness which sometimes destroys its effect; and often to indulge in a strain of reflection more remarkable for its subtlety of conceit, than for its appropriation to the incidents before him. Two other material objections must be noticed, as arising from the conduct of the poem, which, in the first place, so far as it respects the character of Adonis, is forced and unnatural; and, in the second, has tempted the poet into the adoption of language so meretricious, as entirely to vitiate the result of any moral purpose which he might have had in view.

These deductions being premised, we do not hesitate to assert, that the *Venus and Adonis* contains many passages worthy of the genius of Shakspeare; and that, as a whole, it is superior in poetic fervour to any production of a similar kind by his contemporaries, anterior to 1587. It will be necessary, however, where so much discrepancy of opinion has existed, to substantiate the first of these assertions, by the production of specimens which shall speak for themselves; and as the conduct and moral of the piece have been given up as indefensible, these must, consequently, be confined to a display of its poetic value; of its occasional merit with regard to versification and imagery.

In the management of his stanza, Shakspeare has exhibited a more general attention to accuracy of rhythm and harmony of cadence, than was customary in his age; few metrical imperfections, indeed, are discoverable either in this piece, or in any of his minor poems; but we are not limited to this negative praise, being able to select from his first effort instances of positive excellence in the structure of his verse.

Of the light and airy elegance which occasionally characterises the

composition of his *Venus and Adonis*, the following will be accepted as no inadequate proofs:—

“ Bid me discourse, I will enchant thine ear,
Or, like a fairy, trip upon the green,
Or, like a nymph, with long dishevel'd hair,
Dance on the sands, and yet no footing seen.

“ If love have lent you twenty thousand tongues,
And every tongue more moving than your own,
Bewitching like the wanton mermaid's songs,
Yet from mine ear the tempting tune is blown.”

To terminate each stanza with a couplet remarkable for its sweetness, terseness, or strength, is a refinement almost peculiar to modern times; yet Shakspeare has sometimes sought for, and obtained this harmony of close: thus Venus, lamenting the beauty of Nature after the death of Adonis, exclaims,

“ The flowers are sweet, their colours fresh and trim;
But true-sweet beauty liv'd and dy'd with him;”

and again, when reproaching the apathy of her companion, —

“ O learn to love; the lesson is but plain,
And, once made perfect, never lost again.”

Nor are there wanting passages in which energy and force are very skilfully combined with melody and rhythm; of the subsequent extracts, which are truly excellent for their vigorous construction, the lines in *Italics* present us with the point and cadence of the present day. Venus, endeavouring to excite the affection of Adonis, who is represented

————— “ more lovely than a man,
More white and red than doves or roses are,”

tells him,

“ I have been woo'd, as I entreat thee now,
Even by the stern and direful god of war,
Whose sinewy neck in battle ne'er did bow —

Over my altars hath he hung his lance,
His batter'd shield, his uncontrolled crest,
And for my sake hath learn'd to sport and dance,
To coy, to wanton, dally, smile, and jest :"

and, on finding her efforts fruitless, she bursts forth into the following energetic reproach :—

" Fie, lifeless picture, cold and senseless stone,
Well-painted idol, image, dull and dead,
Statue, contenting but the eye alone,
Thing like a man, but of no woman bred."

The death of Adonis, however, banishes all vestige of resentment, and, amid numerous exclamations of grief and anguish, gives birth to prophetic intimations of the hapless fate of all succeeding attachments :—

" Since thou art dead, lo ! here I prophesy,
Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend ;
It shall be waited on with jealousy,
Find sweet beginning, but unsavoury end ; —

It shall suspect, where is no cause of fear ;
It shall not fear, where it should most mistrust ;
It shall be merciful, and too severe,
And most deceiving, when it seems most just ; —

It shall be fickle, false, and full of fraud,
And shall be blasted in a breathing-while ;
The bottom poison, and the top o'er-straw'd
With sweets, that shall the sharpest sight beguile :
The strongest body shall it make most weak,
Strike the wise dumb, and teach the fool to speak."

These passages are not given with the view of impressing upon the mind of the reader, that such is the constant strain of the versification of the *Venus and Adonis* ; but merely to show, that, while in narrative poetry he equals his contemporaries in the general structure of his verse, he has produced, even in his earliest attempt, instances of beauty, melody, and force, in the mechanism of his stanzas, which have no parallel in their pages. In making this assertion, it must

not be forgotten, that we date the composition of *Venus and Adonis* anterior to 1590, that the comparison solely applies to narrative poetry, and consequently that all contest with Spenser is precluded.

It now remains to be proved, that the merits of this mythological story are not solely founded on its occasional felicity of versification ; but that in description, in the power of delineating, with a master's hand, the various objects of nature, it possesses more claims to notice than have hitherto been allowed.

After the noble pictures of the horse which we find drawn in the book of Job, and in Virgil, few attempts to sketch this spirited animal can be expected to succeed ; yet, among these few, impartial criticism may demand a station for the lines below :—

“ Imperiously he leaps, he neighs, he bounds,
And now his woven girths he breaks asunder,
The bearing earth with his hard hoof he wounds,
Whose hollow womb resounds like heaven's thunder. —

His ears up prick'd ; his braided hanging mane
Upon his compass'd crest now stands on end ;
His nostrils drink the air, and forth again,
As from a furnace, vapours doth he send : —

Sometimes he trots, as if he told the steps,
With gentle majesty, and modest pride :
Anon he rears upright, curvets and leaps,
As who should say, lo ! thus my strength is try'd. —

Look, when a painter would surpass the life,
In limning out a well-proportion'd steed,
His art's with Nature's workmanship at strife,
As if the dead the living should exceed ;
So did this horse excell a common one,
In shape, in courage, colour, pace, and bone.

Round-hoof'd, short-jointed, fetlocks shag and long,
Broad-breast, full eyes, small head, and nostril wide,
High crest, short ears, straight legs, and passing strong,
Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide,”

Venus, apprehensive for the fate of Adonis, should he attempt to hunt the boar, endeavours to dissuade him from his purpose, by drawing a most formidable description of that savage inmate of the woods, and by painting, on the other hand, the pleasures to be derived from the pursuit of the hare. The danger necessarily incurred from attacking the former, and the various efforts by which the latter tries to escape her pursuers, are presented to us with great fidelity and warmth of colouring.

“ Thou had’st been gone, quoth she, sweet boy, ere this,
But that thou told’st me, thou would’st hunt the boar,
O be advis’d; thou know’st not what it is
With javelin’s point a churlish swine to gore,
Whose tushes never-sheath’d he whetteth still,
Like to a mortal butcher, bent to kill.

On his bow back he hath a battle set
Of bristly pikes, that ever threat his foes;
His eyes, like glow-worms, shine when he doth fret;
His snout digs sepulchres where-e’er he goes;
Being mov’d, he strikes whate’er is in his way,
And whom he strikes, his crooked tushes slay.

His brawny sides, with hairy bristles armed,
Are better proof than thy spear’s point can enter;
His short thick neck cannot be easily harmed;
Being ireful, on the lion he will venture. —

But if thou needs wilt hunt, be rul’d by me;
Uncouple at the timorous flying hare,
Or at the fox, which lives by subtlety,
Or at the roe, which no encounter dare:
Pursue these fearful creatures o’er the downs,
And on thy well-breath’d horse keep with thy hounds.

And when thou hast on foot the purblind hare,
Mark the poor wretch to overshoot his troubles,
How he out-runs the wind, and with what care
He cranks and crosses, with a thousand doubles: —

Sometime he runs among the flock of sheep,
To make the cunning hounds mistake their smell;
And sometime where earth-delving conies keep,
To stop the loud pursuers in their yell;
And sometime sorteth with a herd of deer;
Danger deviseth shifts; wit waits on fear:

For there his smell with others being mingled,
The hot scent-snuffling hounds are driven to doubt,
Ceasing their clamorous cry till they have singled
With much ado the cold fault cleanly out ;

Then do they spend their mouths : Echo replies,
As if another chase were in the skies.

By this, poor Wat, far off upon a hill,
Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear,
To hearken if his foes pursue him still ;
Anon their loud alarums he doth hear ;
And now his grief may be compared well
To one sore-sick, that hears the passing bell.

Then shalt thou see the dew-bedabbled wretch
Turn, and return, indenting with the way ;
Each envious briar his weary legs doth scratch,
Each shadow makes him stop, each murmur stay."

This poem abounds with similes, many of which include miniature sketches of no small worth and beauty. A few of these shall be given, and they will not fail to impart a favourable impression of the fertility and resources of the rising bard. The fourth and fifth, which we have distinguished by Italics, more especially deserve notice, the former representing a minute piece of natural history, and the latter describing in words adequate to their subject, one of the most terrible convulsions of nature.

" as one on shore
Gazing upon a late-embarked friend,
Till the wild waves will have him seen no more,
Whose ridges with the meeting clouds contend.

" as one that unaware
Hath dropp'd a precious jewel in the flood."

" Or 'stonish'd as night-wanderers often are,
Their light blown out in some mistrustful wood."

" *Or, as the snail, whose tender horns being hit,
Shrinks backward in his shelly cave with pain."*

" *As when the wind, imprison'd in the ground,
Struggling for passage, earth's foundation shakes."*

We shall close these extracts from the *Venus and Adonis*, with two passages which form a striking contrast, and which prove that

the author possessed, at the commencement of his career, no small portion of those powers which were afterwards to astonish the world ; powers alike unrivalled either in developing the terrible or the beautiful.

“ And therefore hath she bribed the Destinies,
To cross the curious workmanship of nature,
To mingle beauty with infirmities,
And pure perfection with impure defeature ;
Making it subject to the tyranny
Of sad mischances and much misery ;

As burning fevers, agues pale and faint,
Life-poisoning pestilence, and frenzies wood,
The marrow-eating sickness, whose attaint
Disorder breeds by heating of the blood :
Surfeits, impostumes, grief, and damn'd despair —

And not the least of all these maladies,
But in one minute's sight brings beauty under —
As mountain snow melts with the mid-day sun.

“ Lo ! here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast
The sun ariseth in his majesty ;
Who doth the world so gloriously behold,
That cedar tops and hills seem burnish'd gold.

Venus salutes him with this fair good morrow :
O thou clear god, and patron of all light,
From whom each lamp and shining star doth borrow
The beauteous influence that makes him bright.” *

If we compare the *Venus and Adonis* of Shakspeare with its classical prototypes ; with the *Epitaphium Adonidis* of Bion, and the beautiful narrative of Ovid, which terminates the tenth book of his *Metamorphoses*, we must confess the inferiority of the English poem, to the former in pathos, and to the latter in elegance ; but if

* These, and the following extracts, are taken from Mr. Malone's edition of the Poems of Shakspeare.

we contrast it with the productions of its own age, it cannot fail of being allowed a large share of relative merit. It has imbibed, indeed, too many of the conceits and puerilities of the period in which it was produced, and it has lost much interest by deviating from tradition; for, as Mr. Steevens has remarked, "the common and more pleasing fable assures us, that

—— "when bright Venus yielded up her charms,
The blest Adonis languish'd in her arms;" *

yet the passages which we have quoted, and the general strain of the poem, are such as amply to account for the popularity which it once enjoyed.

That this was great, that the work was highly valued by poetic minds, and, as might be supposed, from the nature of its subject, the favourite of the young, the ardent, and susceptible, there are not wanting several testimonies. In 1595, John Weever had written at the age of nineteen, as he informs us, a collection of Epigrams, which he published in 1599 †; of these the twenty-second is inscribed *Ad Gulielmum Shakspeare*, and contains a curious though quaint encomium on some of the poet's earliest productions: —

"Honie tong'd Shakspeare, when I saw thine issue,
I swore Apollo got them, and none other,
Their rosie-tainted features clothed in tissue,
Some heaven-born goddesse said to be their mother.
Rose-cheeckt Adonis with his amber tresses,
Faire fire-hot Venus charming him to love her,
Chaste Lucretia virgine-like her dresses,
Proud lust-stung Tarquine seeking still to prove her." ‡

* Malone's Supplement to Shakspeare, 1780, vol. i. p. 463.

† "Epigrammes in the oldest Cut and newest Fashion. A twice seven Houres (in so many Weekes) Studie. No longer (like the Fashion) not unlike to continue. The first seven, John Weever.

Sit voluisse sit valuisse.

At London: printed by V. S. for Thomas Bushell, and are to be sold at his shop, at the great North doore of Paules. 1599. 12mo."—Vide Beloe's Anecdotes, vol. vi. p. 156.

‡ Beloe's Anecdotes, vol. vi. p. 159.

In a copy of Speght's edition of Chaucer, which formerly belonged to Dr. Gabriel Harvey, this physician, the noted opponent of Nash, has inserted the following remarks: — "*The younger sort take much delight in Shakspeare's Venus and Adonis*; but his Lucrece, and his tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke, have it in them to please the wiser sort, 1598." *

Meres, also, in his "Wit's Treasury," published in the same year with the above date, draws a parallel between Ovid and Shakspeare, resulting from the composition of this piece and his other minor poems. "As the soule of Euphorbus," he observes, "was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweete wittie soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakspeare, witnes his *Venus and Adonis*, his Lucrece, his sugred sonnets among his private friends, &c." †

A third tribute, and of a similar kind, was paid to the early efforts of our author in 1598, by Richard Barnefield, from which it must be inferred that the versification of Shakspeare was considered by his contemporaries as pre-eminently sweet and melodious, a decision for which many stanzas in the *Venus and Adonis* might furnish sufficient foundation: —

" And Shakspeare thou, whose honey-flowing vein,
(Pleasing the world,) thy praises doth contain,
Whose *Venus*, and whose Lucrece, sweet and chaste,
Thy name in fame's immortal book hath plac'd,
Live ever you, at least in fame live ever!
Well may the body die, but fame die never." ‡

That singularly curious old comedy, "*The Returne from Parnassus*," written in 1606, descanting on the poets of the age, introduces Shakspeare solely on account of his miscellaneous poems, a

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 2. note by Steevens.

† Censura Literaria, vol. ix. p. 45, 46.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 197.

striking proof of their popularity; and, like his predecessors, the author characterises them by the sweetness of their metre:

“ Who loves Adonis love, or Lucre’s rape,
His sweeter verse contaynes hart-robbing life,
Could but a graver subject him content,
Without love’s foolish lazy languishment.” *

It appears, likewise, from this extract, and will further appear from two subsequent quotations, that the meretricious tendency of the *Venus and Adonis* did not altogether escape the notice or the censure of the period which produced it.

A more ample eulogium on the merits of Shakspeare’s first production issued from the press in 1607, in a poem composed by William Barksted, and entitled, *Mirrha the Mother of Adonis; or Lustes Prodigies*, of which the concluding lines thus appreciate the value of his model:—

“ But stay, my Muse, in thine own confines keep,
And wage not warre with so deere lov’d a neighbour;
But having sung thy day-song, rest and sleep;
Preserve thy small fame, and his greater favor.
His song was worthie merit; Shakspeare, hee
Sung the faire blossome, thou the wither’d tree:
Laurel is due to him; his art and wit
Hath purchas’d it; cyprus thy brows will fit.” †

A pasquinade on the literature of his times was published by John Davies of Hereford in 1611; it first appeared in his “Scourge of Folly,” under the title of “A Scourge for Paper-Persecutors,” and among other objects of his satire *Paper*, here personified, is represented as complaining of the pruriency of Shakspeare’s youthful fancy.

“ Another (ah, harde happe) mee vilifies
With art of love, and how to subtilize,

* Ancient British Drama, vol. i. p. 49. col. 2.

† Malone’s Supplement, vol. i. p. 463.

Making lewd *Venus* with eternal lines
 To tie *Adonis* to her love's designs;
 Fine wit is shewn therein: but finer 'twere,
 If not attired in such bawdy geare."*

The charge of *subtilizing* which this passage conveys, may certainly be substantiated against the minor poetry of our bard: no small portion of it is visible in the *Venus and Adonis*; but the *Rape of Lucrece* is extended by its admission to nearly a duplicate of what ought to have been its proper size.

To the quotations now given, as commemorative of Shakspeare's primary effort in poetry, we shall add one, whose note of praise is, that our author was equally excellent in painting lust or continency:—

" Shakspeare, that nimble Mercury thy brain
 Lulls many-hundred Argus' eyes asleep,
 So fit for all thou fashionest thy vein,
 At the horse-foot fountain thou hast drunk full deep.
 Virtue's or vice's theme to thee all one is;
 Who loves chaste life, there's *Lucrece* for a teacher:
 Who list read lust, there's *Venus* and *Adonis*
 True model of a most lascivious lecher."†

From the admiration thus warmly expressed by numerous contemporaries, even when connected with slight censure, it will, of course,

* *Censura Literaria*, vol. vi. p. 276. A second edition of this satire was published separately, in 4to. 1625.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 197, 198. — Many passages, I believe, might be added to those given in the text, which point out the great popularity of our author's earliest effort in poetry. Thus, in the *Merrie Conceited Jest*s of George Peele, an author who died in or before 1598, the Tapster of an Inn in Pye-corner is represented as "much given to poetry: for he had ingrossed the Knight of the Sunne, *Venus and Adonis*, and other pamphlets." — Reprint, p. 28.

Again in the *Dumb Knight*, an Historical Comedy, by Lewis Machin, printed in 1608, one of the characters, after quoting several lines from *Venus and Adonis*, concludes by saying,—

" Go thy way, thou best book in the world.

" *Veloups*. I pray you, sir, what book do you read?

" *President*. A book that never an orator's clerk in this kingdom but is beholden unto; it is called, Maid's Philosophy, or *Venus and Adonis*."

Ancient British Drama, vol. ii. p. 146.

be inferred that the demand for re-impressions of the *Venus and Adonis* would be frequent ; and this was, indeed, the fact. In the year following the publication of the *editio princeps*, there is reason to conclude that the second impression was printed ; for the poem appears again entered in the Stationers' books on the 23d of June, 1594, by — Harrison, sen. ; unless this entry be merely preliminary to the edition of 1596, which was printed in small octavo, by Richard Field, for John Harrison. * Of the subsequent editions, one was published, in 1600, by John Harrison, in 12mo. ; another occurs in 1602, and, in 1607, the *Venus and Adonis* was reprinted at Edinburgh, “ which must be considered,” remarks Mr. Beloe, “ as an indubitable proof, that at a very early period the Scotch knew and admired the genius of Shakspeare.” † The title-page of this edition has the same motto as in the original impression ; beneath it is a Phoenix in the midst of flames, and then follows “ Edinburgh. Printed by John Wreittoun, are to bee sold in his shop, a little beneath the Salt Trone. 1607.”

It is highly probable, that between the period of the Edinburgh copy, and the year 1617, the date of the next extant edition, an intervening impression may have been issued ; *Venus and Adonis*, it should be noticed, is entered in the Stationers' Register, by W. Barrett, Feb. 16. 1616 ; and the next entry is by John Parker, March 8. 1619, preparatory perhaps to the edition which appeared in 1620. In 1630, another re-print was called for, which was again repeated in 1640, and in the various subsequent editions of our author's poems.

The same favourable reception which accompanied the birth and progress of the *Venus and Adonis* attended, likewise, the next poem which our author produced, THE RAPE OF LUCRECE. This was printed in quarto, in 1594, by Richard Field, for John Harrison, and has a

* It is the more probable that the entry of 1594 indicates a separate edition, as an entry of the impression of 1596 appears in the Stationers' Register, by W. Leake, dated June 23. 1596.—Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 121.

† Beloe's Anecdotes, vol. i. p. 363. This copy is in the possession of Mr. Chalmers.

copious *Argument* prefixed, which, as Mr. Malone remarks, is a curiosity, being, with the two dedications to the Earl of Southampton, the only prose compositions of our great poet (not in a dramatic form) now remaining. *

The *Rape of Lucrece* is written in stanzas of seven lines each; the first four in alternate rhyme; the fifth line corresponding with the second and fourth, and the sixth and seventh lines forming a couplet. To this construction it is probable that Shakspeare was led through the popularity of Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond*, which was published in 1592, and exhibits the same metrical system.

If we had just reason for condemning the prolixity of *Venus and Adonis*, a still greater motive for similar censure will be found in the *Rape of Lucrece*, which occupies no less than two hundred and sixty-five stanzas, and, of course, includes one thousand eight hundred and fifty-five lines, whilst the tale, as conducted by Ovid, is impressively related in about one hundred and forty verses!

From what source Shakspeare derived his fable, whether through a classic or a Gothic channel is uncertain. The story is of frequent occurrence in ancient writers; for, independent of the narrative in the *Fasti* of the Roman poet, it has been told by *Dionysius Halicarnassensis*, by *Livy*, by *Dion Cassius*, and *Diodorus Siculus*. "I learn from Coxeter's notes," says Warton, "that the *Fasti* were translated into English verse before the year 1570. If so, the many little pieces now current on the subject of *Lucretia*, although her legend is in Chaucer, might immediately originate from this source. In 1568, occurs a *Ballett* called, 'The greivous complaynt of Lucrece.' And afterwards, in the year 1569, is licenced to James Robertes, 'A ballet of the death of Lucryssia.' There is also a ballad of the legend of Lucrece, printed in 1576. These publications might give rise to Shakspeare's *Rape of Lucrece*, which appeared in 1594. At this period of our poetry, we find the same subject occupying the atten-

* Malone's Supplement, vol. i. p. 469. note.

tion of the public for many years, and successively presented in new and various forms by different poets. Lucretia was the grand example of conjugal fidelity throughout the Gothic ages." *

One material advantage which the *Rape of Lucrece* possesses over its predecessor, is, that its moral is unexceptionable; and, on this account, we have the authority of Dr. Gabriel Harvey, that it was preferred by the *graver* readers. In every other respect, no very decided superiority, we are afraid, can be adduced. It is more studied and elaborate, it is true; but the result of this labour has in many instances been only an accumulation of far-fetched imagery and fatiguing circumlocution. Yet, notwithstanding these defects, palpable as they are, the poem has not merited the depreciation to which it has been subjected by some very fastidious critics. It occasionally delights us by a few fervid sketches of imagination and description; and by several passages of a moral and pathetic cast, clothed in language of much energy and beauty; and though the general tone of the versification be more heavy and encumbered than that of the *Venus and Adonis*, it is sometimes distinguished by point, legerity, and grace. The quotations, indeed, which we are about to give from this neglected poem, are not only such as would confer distinction on any work, but, to say more, they are worthy of the poet which produced them.

Of metrical sweetness, of moral reflection, and of splendid and appropriate imagery, we find an exquisite specimen at the very opening of the poem. Collatine, boasting of his felicity "in the possession of his beauteous mate," the bard exclaims—

" O happiness enjoy'd but of a few !
And, if possess'd, as soon decayed and done
As is the morning's silver melting dew,
Against the golden splendour of the sun !
A date expir'd, and cancel'd ere begun." † Stanza iv.

* Warton's History of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 415, 416.—" It is remarkable," says the historian, in a note on this passage, " that the sign of Berthelette, the king's printer in Fleet-street, who flourished about 1540, was the Lucretia, or as he writes it, *Lucretia Romana*."

† The last line of this extract is taken from the 12mo. edit. of 1616.

We must not omit also the first clause of the sixteenth stanza, which affords an admirable example of spirited and harmonious rhythm. Tarquin in addressing Lucrece :—

“ He stories to her ears her husband’s fame,
Won in the fields of fruitful Italy ;
And decks with praises Collatine’s high name ;
Made glorious by his manly chivalry,
With bruised arms and wreaths of victory.”

One of the peculiar excellences of the *Rape of Lucrece*, is its frequent expression of correct sentiment in pointed language and emphatic verse. Tarquin, soliloquising on the crime which he is about to commit, thus gives vent to the agonies of momentary contrition :—

“ Fair torch, burn out thy light, and lend it not
To darken her whose light excelleth thine !
And die unhallow’d thoughts, before you blot
With your uncleanness that which is divine !

O shame to knighthood and to shining arms !
O foul dishonour to my household’s grave !
O impious act, including all foul harms !
A martial man to be soft fancy’s slave ! —

What win I, if I gain the thing I seek ?
A dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy !
Who buys a minute’s mirth, to wail a week ?
Or sells eternity, to get a toy ?”

The same terseness of diction and concinnity of versification appear in the subsequent lines :—

“ Then for thy husband’s and thy children’s sake,
Tender my suit : bequeath not to their lot
The shame that from them no device can take,
The blemish that will never be forgot.”

It may, likewise, be added, that simplicity and strength in the modulation, together with a forcible plainness of phraseology, characterise a few stanzas, of which one shall be given as an instance:—

“ O teach me how to make mine own excuse !
 Or, at the least, this refuge let me find ;
 Though my gross blood be stain'd with this abuse,
 Immaculate and spotless is my mind ;
 That was not forc'd ; that never was inclin'd
 To accessary yieldings — but, still pure,
 Doth in her poison'd closet yet endure.”

To these short examples, which are selected for the purpose of showing, not only the occasional felicity of the poet in the mechanism of his verse, but the uncommon and unapprehended worth of what this mechanism is the vehicle, we shall subjoin three passages of greater length, illustrative of what this early production of our author's Muse can exhibit in the three great departments of the *descriptive*, the *pathetic*, and the *morally sublime*.

Lucrece, in the paroxysms of her grief, is represented as telling her mournful story

to a piece
 where
 and where

“ To pencil'd pensiveness and coloured sorrow,”

“ Of skilful painting, made for Priam's Troy,

“ Many a dry drop seemed a weeping tear,
 Shed for the slaughter'd husband by the wife ;”

“ The red blood reek'd to show the painter's strife,
 And dying eyes gleam'd forth their ashy lights :”

“ She throws her eyes about the painting round,
 And whom she finds forlorn, she doth lament :
 At last she sees a wretched image bound,
 That piteous looks to Phrygian shepherds lent ;
 His face, though full of cares, yet show'd content :
 Onward to Troy with the blunt swains he goes,
 So mild, that Patience seem'd to scorn his woes.

In him the painter labour'd with his skill
 To hide deceit, and give the harmless show
 An humble gait, calm looks, eyes wailing still,
 A brow unbent, that seem'd to welcome woe ;
 Cheeks, neither red nor pale, but mingled so
 That blushing red no guilty instance gave,
 Nor ashy pale the fear that false hearts have.

But like a constant and confirmed devil,
 He entertain'd a show so seeming just,
 And therein so ensconc'd his secret evil,
 That jealousy itself could not mistrust —

The well-skill'd workman this mild image drew
 For perjur'd Sinon."

This is a picture, of which the colouring, but too often overcharged in every other part of the poem, may be pronounced chaste and correct.

A simple and unaffected flow of thought, expressed in diction of equal purity and plainness, are essential requisites towards the production of the pathetic, either in poetry or prose; and, unfortunately, in the *Rape of Lucrece*, these excellences, especially in their combined state, are of very rare occurrence. We are not, however, totally destitute of passages which, by their tenderness and simplicity, appeal to the heart. Thus the complete wretchedness of Lucretia is powerfully and simply painted in the following lines: —

" The little birds that tune their morning's joy,
 Make her moans mad with their sweet melody.
 For mirth doth search the bottom of annoy;
 Sad souls are slain in merry company;
 Grief best is pleas'd with grief's society:
 True sorrow then is feelingly suffic'd,
 When with like semblance it is sympathiz'd."

She, accordingly, invokes the melancholy nightingale, and invites her, from similarity of fate, to be her companion in distress: —

" And for, poor bird, thou sing'st not in the day,
 As shaming any eye should thee behold,
 Some dark deep desert, seated from the way,
 That knows nor parching heat nor freezing cold,
 Will we find out; and there we will unfold
 To creatures stern sad tunes, to change their kinds:
 Since men prove beasts, let beasts bear gentle minds."

" Shakspeare has here," says Mr. Malone, in a note on the first of these stanzas, " as in all his writings, shown an intimate acquaintance

with the human heart. Every one that has felt the pressure of grief will readily acknowledge that *mirth doth search the bottom of annoy.*" *

The last specimen which we shall select from this poem, would alone preserve it from oblivion, were it necessary to protect from such a fate any work which bears the mighty name of Shakspeare. Indeed, whether we consider this extract in relation to its diction, its metre, its sentiment, or the sublimity of its close, it is alike calculated to excite our admiration:—

“ Unruly blasts wait on the tender spring;
Unwholesome weeds take root with precious flowers;
The adder hisses where the sweet birds sing;
What virtue breeds, iniquity devours:
We have no good that we can say is ours,
But ill-annexed opportunity
Or kills his life, or else his quality.

O, Opportunity! thy guilt is great:
'Tis thou that execut'st the traitor's treason;
Thou set'st the wolf where he the lamb may get;
Whoever plots the sin, thou point'st the season;
'Tis thou that spurn'st at right, at law, at reason;
And in thy shady cell, where none may spy him,
Sits Sin, to seize the souls that wander by him.”

We have already seen, that, in the passages quoted from contemporary writers in favour of *Venus and Adonis*, the *Rape of Lucrece* has, with the exception of two instances, been honoured with equal notice and equal approbation. Here, therefore, it will only be necessary to add those notices in which the latter production is the exclusive object of praise.

Of these, the earliest† is to be found in the first edition of

* Supplement, vol. i. p. 537. note.

† Perhaps the opening stanza of the following scarce poem, entitled “Epicedium. A funerall Song, upon the vertuous life and godly death of the right worshipfull the Lady Helen Branch;

Virtus sola manet, cætera cuncta ruunt.

London, printed by Thomas Creed, 1594;” may allude to our author's *Rape of Lucrece*; —

Drayton's "Matilda, the faire and chaste Daughter of Lord Robert Fitzwater," published in 1594, a few months, or probably weeks, after the appearance of the *Rape of Lucrece*. In this impression, and solely in this impression, the Heroine thus eulogises the composition of our bard:—

"Lucrece, of whom proud Rome hath boasted long,
Lately reviv'd to live another age,
And here arriv'd to tell of Tarquin's wrong,
Her chaste denial, and the tyrants rage,
Acting her passions on our stately stage,
She is remember'd, all forgetting me,
Yet I as fair and chaste as ere was she." *

The year following Drayton's *Matilda*, a work was printed in quarto, under the title of *Polimanteia*, in the margin of which Shakspeare's *Lucrece* is thus cursorily mentioned. "All praise-worthy Lucretia, Sweet Shakspeare." †

"You that to shew your wits, have taken toyle
In regist'ring the deeds of noble men;
And sought for matter in a forraine soyle,
As worthie subjects of your silver pen,
Whom you have rais'd from darke oblivion's den.
You that have writ of chaste Lucretia,
Whose death was witnesse of her spotlesse life:
Or pen'd the praise of sad Cornelia,
Whose blamelesse name hath made her fame so rife,
As noble Pompey's most renoumed wife:
Hither unto your home direct your eies,
Whereas, unthought on, much more matter lies."

Vide Brydges's *Restituta*, vol. iii. p. 297—299.

* Malone's Supplement, vol. i. p. 575.

† "Polimanteia, or The meanes lawfull and unlawfull, to judge of the fall of a Common-wealth, against the frivolous and foolish conjectures of this age. Whereunto is added, A letter from England to her three daughters, Cambridge, Oxford, Innes of Court, and to all the rest of her inhabitants, &c. &c. Printed by John Legate, Printer to the Universitie of Cambridge, 1595."

"This work," remarks Mr. Haslewood, "is divided into three parts; the first, *Polimanteia*, is on the subtleties and unlawfulness of Divination, the second, an address from England to her three Daughters; and the third, England to her Inhabitants, concluding with the speeches of Religion and Loyalty to her children. Some researches have been

The next separate notice of this poem occurs in some verses prefixed to the second edition of "Willobie his Avis," which appeared in 1596. They are subscribed *Contraria Contrariis Vigilantius Dornitanus*, and open with the allusion to Shakspeare's Lucrece:—

" In lavine land though Livie boast,
There hath beene seene a constant dame;
Though Rome lament that she have lost
The garland of her rarest fame,
Yet now ye see that here is found
As great a faith in English ground.

Though Collatine have dearly bought
To high renowne a lasting life,
And found, that most in vaine have sought
To have a faire and constant wife,
Yet Tarquine pluckt his glistring grape,
And Shake-speare paintes poor Lucrece rape."*

To these contemporary notices, with the view of showing what was thought of the *Rape of Lucrece* half a century after its production, we shall subjoin the opinion of *S. Sheppard*, who, in "The Times Displayed in Six Sestyads," printed in 1646, 4to., comparing Shakspeare with Euripides, Sophocles, and Aristophanes, adds—

" His sweet and his to be admired lay
He wrote of lustful Tarquin's rape, shews he
Did understand the depth of poesie."†

The editions of the *Rape of Lucrece* were as numerous as those of the *Venus and Adonis*. "In thirteen years after their first appear-

made by a friend to ascertain the author's name, but without success. He was evidently a man of learning, and well acquainted with the works of contemporary writers, both foreign and domestic. The second part of his work is too interesting, from the names enumerated in the margin, not to be given entire. The mention of Shakspeare is two years earlier than Meres's *Palladis Tamia*, a circumstance that has escaped the research of all the Commentators; although a copy of the *Polimanteia* was possessed by Dr. Farmer, and the work is repeatedly mentioned by Oldys, in his manuscript notes on Langbaine."—*British Bibliographer*, vol. i. p. 274.

* *British Bibliographer*, No. XIV. p. 247.

† *Ibid.* No. V. p. 533.

ance," remarks Mr. Malone, "six impressions of each of them were printed, while in the same period, his *Romeo and Juliet*, one of his most popular plays, passed only twice through the press." *

Of the early re-impressions, those which are extant, are in small octavo, of the date 1596, 1598, 1600, 1607, 1616, 1624, 1632, &c. In the title of that which was published in 1616, occur the words *newly revised and corrected*. "When this copy first came to my hands," says Mr. Malone, "it occurred to me, that our author had perhaps an intention of revising and publishing all his works, (which his fellow-comedians, in their preface to his plays, seem to hint he would have done, if he had lived,) and that he began with this early production of his muse, but was prevented by death from completing his scheme; for he died in the same year in which this *corrected* copy of *Lucrece* (as it is called) was printed. But on an attentive examination of this edition, I have not the least doubt that the piece was revised by some other hand. It is so far from being correct, that it is certainly the most inaccurate and corrupt of all the ancient copies." †

To the Rape of *Lucrece* succeeds, in the order of publication, the PASSIONATE PILGRIM. This imperfect collection of our author's minor pieces was printed by W. Jaggard in 1599, in small octavo, and with the poet's name.

* Malone's Supplement, vol. i. p. 575.

† Supplement, vol. i. p. 471.—An edition of the Rape of *Lucrece*, with a supplement by John Quarles, was published about 1676; for at the end of a copy of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, in my possession, printed in 1676, and the eighth edition, is a catalogue of books sold by Peter Parker, the proprietor of the above impression, among which occurs the following article:—

"The Rape of *Lucrece* committed by *Tarquin* the sixth, and remarkable judgements that befell him for it, by that incomparable Master of our English Poetry *William Shakespeare* Gentleman. Whereunto is annexed the Banishment of *Tarquin* or the reward of Lust, by *John Quarles*, 8vo."

It is remarkable, that, at the commencement of the eighteenth century, our author's *Venus and Adonis*, and *The Rape of Lucrece*, were re-published as *State Poems*, though it would puzzle the most acute critic to discover, in either of them, the smallest allusion to the politics of their age. The work in which they are thus enrolled, and which betrays also the most complete ignorance of the era of their production, is entitled "STATE POEMS. — Poems on affairs of State from 1620 to 1707." London, 1703-7. 8vo. 4 vols.

Not only is this little work entitled to notice from the priority of its public appearance, before the larger collection termed "Sonnets;" but there is, we think, sufficient proof that a part of its contents had, as compositions, a prior origin. It opens with a sonnet inserted in *Love's Labour's Lost* *, a play which, according to Mr. Chalmers, was written in 1592, and not later, even in the calculation of Mr. Malone, than 1594. The second sonnet, and the fourth, seventh, and ninth, are founded on the story of *Venus and Adonis*, and, from their similarity in diction, imagery, and sentiment, to "the first heir" of the poet's "invention," appear to have been originally intended, either for insertion in the greater work, or were preludes to its composition: they "seem," remarks Mr. Malone, "to have been essays of the author when he first conceived the idea of writing a poem on the subject of Venus and Adonis, and before the scheme of his poem was adjusted;" and he adds, in a subsequent page, that the eighth sonnet "seems to have been intended for a dirge to be sung by Venus on the death of Adonis." †

Beside these intimations of very early composition in the *Passionate Pilgrim*, a similar inference may be drawn from our author's allusion, in his sixth sonnet, to Dowland as a celebrated lutenist, and from a notice in the old copy that the ballad commencing "*It was a lord's daughter*," and the five following poems, were set to music, which music, says Oldys, in one of his manuscripts, was the composition of John and Thomas Morley. Now Dowland had obtained celebrity in his art as early as 1590; and in 1597, when Bachelor of Music in both the universities, published his first book of Songs or Airs, in four parts, for the Lute; and Tho. Morley, who, there is reason to believe, was deceased in 1600, had still earlier been in vogue, and continued to publish his compositions until 1597, in which year appeared his Canzonets.

When Meres, therefore, printed his *Wit's Treasury* in 1598, it is highly probable that the close of the following passage, already quoted

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 105. Act iv. sc. 3.—We have found reason, as will be seen hereafter, to ascribe this play to the year 1591.

† Malone's Supplement, vol. i. pp. 710. 715.

for a different purpose, and which has been thought to refer exclusively to the "Sonnets" afterwards published in 1609, particularly alluded also to the sonnets of the *Passionate Pilgrim*, which had been privately circulated and set to music by Dowland and Morley. "As the soul of Euphorbus," says he, "was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakspeare. Witness his Venus and Adonis, his Lucrece, *his sugred Sonnets* among his private friends, &c."

It is remarkable that the year following this notice by Meres, appeared Jaggard's first edition of the *Passionate Pilgrim*. May we not conclude, therefore, that this encomium on the manuscript sonnets of Shakspeare, induced Jaggard to collect all the lyric poetry of our author which he could obtain through his own research and that of his friends, and to publish it surreptitiously with a title of his own manufacture? That it was not sent into the world under the direction, or even with the knowledge of Shakspeare, must be evident from the circumstance of Marlowe's madrigal, *Come live with me, &c.* being inserted in the collection; nor is it likely, setting this error aside, that Shakspeare, in his thirty-third year, at a time when he had written several plays including some dramatic songs, and undoubtedly had produced a large portion of the sonnets which were given to the world in 1609, would have published a Collection so scanty and unconnected as the *Passionate Pilgrim*, which, independent of Marlowe's poem, contains but twenty pieces.

Indeed we are warranted in attributing not only the edition of 1599 solely to the officiousness of Jaggard, but likewise two subsequent impressions, of which the last furnishes us with some further curious proofs of this printer's skill in book-making, and also with an interesting anecdote relative to our bard.

The precise period when the second edition issued from the press was unknown to Mr. Malone*, and is not yet ascertained; but the

* "I know not," says this gentleman, "when the second edition was printed."—Reed's Shakspeare, 1803, vol. ii. p. 153.

third edition, printed in 1612, in small octavo, and published by W. Jaggard, is connected with the following literary history.

In 1609, Thomas Heywood published a folio volume entitled "Troia Britanica: or, Great Britaine's Troy. A Poem, devided into 17 severall Cantons, intermixed with many pleasant poetickall Tales. Concluding with an Universal Chronicle from the Creation, untill these present Times." This work was printed and published by William Jaggard, and includes two translations from Ovid, namely the epistles of Paris to Helen, and Helen to Paris, "which being so pertinent to our historie," says Heywood, "I thought necessary to translate."

It happened, unfortunately for the honest fame of Jaggard, that when he published the third edition of the *Passionate Pilgrim* in 1612, he was tempted, with the view of increasing the size of his volume, to insert these versions by Heywood, dropping, however, the translator's name, and, of course, suffering them to be ascribed to Shakspeare, who appears in the title-page as the author of the entire collection.

Shortly after this imposition on the public had gone forth, Heywood produced his "Apology for Actors. Containing three briefe Treatises. 1. Their Antiquity. 2. Their Ancient Dignity. 3. The true use of their quality. London: Printed by Nicholas Okes, 1612," 4to.; and at the close of this thin treatise, which consists but of sixty pages, the author addresses the following remarkable epistle to his *new* bookseller:—

"To my approved good friend, Mr. Nicholas Okes.

"The infinite faults escaped in my booke of Britaine's Troy, by the negligence of the printer, as the misquotations, mistaking of syllables, misplacing halfe lines, coining of strange and never heard of words: these being without number, when I would have taken a particular account of the *errata*, the printer answered me, hee would not publish his owne disworkemanship, but rather let his owne fault

lye upon the necke of the author: and being fearfull that others of his quality, had beene of the same nature, and condition, and finding you on the contrary, so carefull and industrious, so serious and laborious, to doe the author all the rights of the presse; I could not choose but gratulate your honest endeavours with this short remembrance. Here likewise, I must necessarily insert a manifest injury done me in that worke, by taking the two Epistles of Paris to Helen, and Helen to Paris, and printing them in a lesse volume, under the name of another (*Shakspeare*), which may put the world in opinion *I might steale them from him; and hee, to doe himselfe right, hath since published them in his owne name*: but as I must acknowledge my lines not worthy his patronage under whom he hath publisht them, so THE AUTHOR (*Shakspeare*) I KNOW MUCH OFFENDED WITH M. JAGGARD THAT (ALTOGETHER UNKNOWNNE TO HIM) PRESUMED TO MAKE SO BOLD WITH HIS NAME. These, and the like dishonesties, I know you to be cleare of; and I could wish but to bee the happy author of so worthy a worke as I could willingly commit to your care and workmanship.

Your's ever,

THOMAS HEYWOOD."

Here nothing can be more evident than that Jaggard introduced these translations in the "Passionate Pilgrim," *without the permission, or even the knowledge* of Shakspeare, and further, that he, Shakspeare, was *much offended with Jaggard for so doing*; a piece of information which completely rescues the memory of Shakspeare from any connivance in the fraud: and yet, strange as it may appear, on this very epistle of Heywood has been founded a charge of imposition against Shakspeare, and the only defence offered for the calumniated poet has been, that, contrary to the public and positive assertion of Heywood, he, and not Heywood, was the translator of the Epistles in question.

This interpretation can only be accounted for on the supposition that both the accuser and defender have alike mistaken the language of Heywood, and have conceived him to have been speaking of him-

self, when, in fact, he was referring to Shakspeare; for, that the passage "*so the author I know much offended with M. Jaggard that (altogether unknowne to him) presumed to make so bold with his name,*" can only be applied to our great poet, must be clear from the consideration that Jaggard, so far from *making bold with the name* of Heywood, dropped it altogether, while he daringly committed the very offence as to Shakspeare, by clandestinely affixing his name to the versions of Heywood.

It will be right, however, to bring forward the accusation and defence of these gentlemen, as they will sufficiently prove that more errors than one have been committed in their attempts, and that these have been the result of a want of intimacy with the literary history of Shakspeare's age.

In the twenty-sixth volume of the *Monthly Magazine*, a correspondent whose signature is Y. Z., after commenting on Heywood's letter, as quoted by Dr. Farmer, and after transcribing the very passage just given above in Italics, declares "this passage contains an heavy charge against Shakspeare: it accuses him, not only of an attempt to impose on the public, but on his patron, Lord Southampton, to whom he dedicated his 'unpolisht lines *;' " and, in his reply to Mr. Lofft, he again remarks,—"The translations in question were certainly published in Shakspeare's name, *and with his permission*; they were also dedicated by him to his best and kindest friend." †

Now, that the passage in debate contains no charge against Shakspeare is, we think, perfectly demonstrable from the import of Heywood's epistle, which we have given at full length, and which, we suspect, Y. Z. has only partially seen, through the medium of Dr. Farmer's quotation.

That the poet imposed upon his patron by dedicating to him his "unpolisht lines," meaning these versions from Ovid, is an assertion totally contrary to the fact. Of his poems Shakspeare dedicated only

* Vol. xxvi. p. 120, 121.

† Ibid. vol. xxvi. p. 523.

two to Lord Southampton, which were published separately, the *Venus and Adonis* in 1593, and the *Rape of Lucrece* in 1594, and the expression "unpolisht lines" alludes exclusively to the first of these productions.

So far from any permission being given by Shakspeare for the insertion of these translations, we find him highly offended with Jaggard for presuming to introduce them under his name; and from the admission of these pieces and Marlowe's poem, we may securely infer that the three editions by Jaggard of the *Passionate Pilgrim* were surreptitious and void of all authority. Such, indeed, seems to have been the opinion of his contemporaries with regard to the first impression; for the two poems in Jaggard's collection of 1599, commencing "My flocks feed not," and "As it fell upon a day," are inscribed to Shakspeare, while in England's Helicon of 1600 they bear the subscription of *Ignoto*, a pretty plain intimation of all want of reliance on the editorial sagacity of this unprincipled bookseller.

Justice requires of us to state that Y. Z. has not brought forward this accusation from any enmity to the poet, of whom, on the contrary, he professes himself to be an ardent admirer; but with the hope of seeing the transaction cleared up to the honour of his favourite bard, a hope which Mr. Lofft, in a subsequent number of the Magazine, generously comes forward to gratify.

In doing this, however, he has unfortunately taken for granted the *data* on which Y. Z. has founded his charge, and builds his defence of the poet on the ill-grounded supposition of his being the real translator of the Epistles of Ovid, treating the question as if it were the subject of a trial at law. The consequence has been a somewhat singular series of mistakes. "It appears," observes Mr. Lofft, "that among his undisputed poems, these translations were published by Jaggard, in 1609."* Here are two assumptions, of which one seems founded on a surmise in the first communication of Y. Z., who says,

* Monthly Magazine, vol. xxvi. p. 312.

“ if my memory does not deceive me, the Poems of Shakspeare appeared in 1609.”* That an edition of the *Passionate Pilgrim* was printed between the years 1599 and 1612 is certain, for the copy of 1612 is expressly termed the *third* edition ; but that this impression took place in 1609, is a conclusion without any authority, for, as we have remarked before, no copy of this date has yet been discovered. Granting, however, that it did issue in this year, there is every reason, from the detail already given, to affirm, that it could not contain the translations in question, and was probably nothing more than a re-impression of the edition of 1599.

“ In the same year” (that is 1609), proceeds Mr. L., “ Heywood makes his claim.” Heywood made no claim until 1612; yet, continues Mr. L., “ this he does in a book entitled ‘ Britain’s Glory,’ published by the very same Jaggard.” Now Heywood wrote no book entitled “ Britain’s Glory,” an assertion which seems to be verified by Mr. Lofft himself, who commences the next paragraph but one in the following terms: — “ This Britain’s *Troy*, in which he advances his claim to these translations, seems to have been the earliest of the many volumes which he published,” a sentence which almost compels us to consider the title “ Britain’s Glory,” in the preceding paragraph, as a typographical error; but it is remarkable that neither in Britain’s *Troy* is this claim advanced, nor was it by many instances the earliest of his publications, a reference to the *Biographia Dramatica* exhibiting not less than five of his productions anterior to 1609.

These inaccuracies in the charge and defence of Shakspeare, the detection of which has proved an unpleasant task, and peculiarly so when we reflect, that to one of the parties and to his family † the

* Monthly Magazine, vol. xxvi. p. 121.

† Of the ill-requited Capel, whose text of Shakspeare, notwithstanding all which has been achieved since his decease, is, perhaps, one of the purest extant, we shall probably have occasion to speak hereafter. Of the talents of his nephew, and of the glowing attachment which he bears to Shakspeare, and of the taste and judgment which he has shown in appreciating his writings and character, we possess an interesting memorial in the *Introduction* to his late publication, entitled “ Aphorisms from Shakspeare.”

venerable bard owes many obligations, will induce us to rely with greater confidence on the simple truth, as developed in the letter of Heywood,—that Shakspeare, as soon as he was made acquainted with the fraudulent attempt of Jaggard, expressed the warmest indignation at his conduct.

On the poetical merit of the *Passionate Pilgrim*, it will not be necessary to say much; for, as the best and greater part of it consists of pieces in the sonnet form, and these are but few, the skill of the bard in this difficult species of composition will more properly be discussed when we come to consider the value of the large collection which he has bequeathed us under the appellation of *Sonnets*. One, however, of the pieces which form the *Passionate Pilgrim*, we shall extract, not only for its beauty as a sonnet, though this be considerable, but as it makes mention of his great poetical contemporary, Edmund Spenser, for whose genius, as might naturally be expected, he appears to have entertained the most deep-felt admiration:—

“ If music and sweet poetry agree,
As they must needs, the sister and the brother,
Then must the love be great ’twixt thee and me,
Because thou lov’st the one, and I the other.
Dowland to thee is dear, whose heavenly touch
Upon the lute doth ravish human sense;
SPENSER to me, whose deep conceit is such,
As passing all conceit, needs no defence.
Thou lov’st to hear the sweet melodious sound,
That Phœbus’ lute, the queen of music, makes;
And I in deep delight am chiefly drown’d,
Whenas himself to singing he betakes.
One god is god of both, as poets feign;
One knight loves both, and both in thee remain.”

The expression, *deep conceit*, “ seems to allude,” remarks Mr. Malone. “ to the *Faery Queen*. If so, these sonnets were not written till after 1590, when the first three books of that poem were published *;” a conjecture which is strongly corroborated by two

* Malone’s Supplement, vol. i. p. 714.

lines from Barnefield's "Remembrance of some English Poets," where the phrase is directly applied to the Fairy Queen :

" Live Spenser ! ever, in thy Fairy Queene ;
Whose like (for *deep conceit*) was never seene." *

The remaining portion of Shakspeare's Poems includes the SONNETS and A LOVER'S COMPLAINT, which were printed together in 1609. † At what period they were written, or in what year of the poet's life they were commenced, has been a subject of much controversy. That some of these sonnets were alluded to by Meres in 1598, when he speaks of our author's " sugred Sonnets among his private friends," and that a few of these very sonnets, as many, at least, as Jaggard could obtain, were published by him the following year, in consequence of this notice, appears to be highly probable ; but that the entire collection, as published in 1609, had been in private circulation anterior to Meres's pamphlet, is a position not easily to be credited, and contrary, indeed, to the internal evidence of the poems themselves, which bear no trifling testimony of having been written at various and even distant periods ; and there is reason to think in the space elapsing between the years 1592 and 1609, between the twenty-eighth and forty-fifth year of the poet's age.

That some of them were early compositions, and produced before the author had acquired any extended reputation, may be inferred from the subsequent passages. In the sixteenth sonnet, with reference to his own poetry, he adopts the expression "*my pupil pen* ;" and in the thirty-second he petitions his mistress to " vouchsafe" him " but this loving thought,"

" *Had my friend's muse grown with this growing age,
A dearer birth than this his love had brought
To march in ranks of better equipage.*"

A small portion of the fame and property which he afterwards

* Printed at the end of his " Lady Pecunia, 4to. London, 1605." This very sonnet, however, has been attributed to Barnefield himself, and is, in all probability, another evidence of the incorrectness or the fraud of Jaggard.

† " Shakspeare's Sonnets, never before imprinted, quarto, 1609, G. Eld, for T. T."

enjoyed, could have fallen to his share when he composed the thirty-seventh sonnet, the purport of which is to declare, that though

— “ *made lame by fortune’s dearest spite,*”

he is rich in the perfections of his mistress, and having engrafted his love to her abundant store, he adds,

“ So then I am not *lame, poor, nor despis’d.*”

There is much reason to conclude, however, that by far the greater part of these sonnets was written after the bard had passed the meridian of his life, and during the ten years which preceded their publication; consequently, that with the exception of a few of earlier date, they were the amusement of his leisure from his thirty-fifth to his forty-fifth year. We have been led to this result from the numerous allusions which the author has made, in these poems, to the effects of time on his person; and though these may be, and are without doubt, exaggerated, yet are they fully adequate to prove that the writer could no longer be accounted young. It is remarkable that the hundred and thirty-eighth sonnet, which was originally printed in the *Passionate Pilgrim* contains a notice of this kind:

“ Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows *my days are past the best;*”

an expression which well accords with the poet’s *then* period of life; for when Jaggard surreptitiously published the minor collection, Shakspeare was thirty-five years old.

Among the allusions of this nature in his “Sonnets,” the selection of a few will answer our purpose. The first occurs in the twenty-second sonnet:—

“ My glass shall not persuade *me I am old,*
So long as youth and thou are of one date.”

The two next are still more explicit:—

" But when my glass shows me myself indeed,
'Bated and chopp'd with tan'd antiquity :'" Son. 62.

" Against my love shall be, *as I am now*,
With time's injurious hand crush'd and o'erworn :" Son. 63.

and the last that we shall give completes the picture, which, though overcharged in its colouring, must be allowed, we think, to reflect some lineaments of the truth : —

" That time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou seest the twilight of such day,
As after sun-set fadeth in the west —
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie." Son. 73.

The comparison instituted in these lines between the *bare ruined choir* of a cathedral, and an avenue at the close of autumn, has given origin to a short but very elegantly written note from the pen of Mr. Steevens. "This image," he remarks, "was probably suggested to Shakspeare by our desolated monasteries. The resemblance between the vaulting of a Gothic isle, and an avenue of trees whose upper branches meet and form an arch over-head, is too striking not to be acknowledged. When the roof of the one is shattered, and the boughs of the other leafless, the comparison becomes yet more solemn and picturesque." *

On the principal writers of this minor but difficult species of lyric poetry, to which Shakspeare could have recourse in his own language, it will be necessary to enter into some brief criticism, in order to ascertain the progress and merit of his predecessors, and the models on which he may be conceived to have more peculiarly founded his own practice.

* Malone's Supplement, vol. i. p. 640.

The rapid introduction of Italian poetry into our country, during the reign of Henry the Eighth, very early brought with it a taste for the cultivation of the sonnet. Before 1540, *Wyat* had written all his poems, many of which are sonnets constructed nearly on the strictest form of the Italian model; the *octant*, or major system being perfectly correct, while the *sextant*, or minor system, differs only from the legitimate type by closing with a couplet. The poetical value of these attempts, however, does not, either in versification or imagery, transcend mediocrity, and are greatly inferior to the productions, in the same department, of his accomplished friend, the gallant but unfortunate *Surrey*. The sonnets of this elegantly romantic character, which were published in 1557, deviate still further from the Italian structure, as they uniformly consist of three quatrains in alternate or elegiac verse, and these terminated by a couplet; a secession from the laws of legitimacy which is amply atoned for by virtues of a far superior order, by simplicity, purity, and sweetness of expression, by unaffected tenderness of sentiment, and by vivid powers of description. To this unexaggerated encomium we must add, that the harmony of his metre is often truly astonishing, and even, in some instances, fully equal to the rhythm of the present age. That the assertion wants not sufficient evidence, will be acknowledged by the adduction of a single specimen:—

SONNET.

“ SET me whereas the sunne doth parche the grène,
 Or where his beames do not dissolve the ise:
 In temperate heate where he is felt and sene:
 In presence prest of people madde or wise:
 Set me in hye, or yet in low degree;
 In longest night, or in the shortest daye:
 In clearest skie, or where cloudes thickest be;
 In lusty youth, or when my heeres are graye:
 Set me in heaven, in earth, or els in hell,
 In hyll or dale, or in the foming flood,
 Thrall, or at large, alive whereso I dwell,
 Sicke or in health, in evill fame or good:
 Hers will I be, and onely with this thought
 Content my self, although my chaunce be nought.”

Of the sonnets of *Watson*, which were published about 1581, we have given an opinion, at some length, in the preceding chapter, and shall merely add here, that neither in their structure, nor in their diction or imagery, could they be, or were they, models for our author; and are indeed greatly inferior, not only to the sonnets of Shakspeare, but to those of almost every other poet of his day.

The sonnets of *Sidney*, which appeared in 1591 under the title of *Astrophel and Stella*, exhibit a variety of metrical arrangement; a few which rival, and several which nearly approach, the most strict Petrarchan form. The *octant* in Sidney is often perfectly correct, while the *sextant* presents us with the structure which, though not very common in Italian, has been, since his time, adopted more frequently than any other by our own poets; that is, where the first line and the third, the second and fourth, the fifth and sixth, rhyme together; with this difference, however, that the moderns, in their *division* of the sextant, have more usually followed the example of Surrey just quoted, in forming their minor system of a quatrain and a couplet, while Sidney more correctly distributes it into *terzette*.

On this arrangement is by far the greater portion of Sidney's sonnets constructed; but the most pleasing of his metrical forms, and which has the merit too of being built after the Italian cast, consists in the *Octant*, of two tetrachords of disjunct alternate rhyme, the last line of the first stanza rhiming to the first of the second; and in the *Sextant*, of a structure in which the first and second, the fourth and fifth, and the third and sixth verses rhyme. Thus has he formed the following exquisite sonnet, which will afford no inaccurate idea of his powers in this province of the art:—

“ O kisse, which doest those ruddie gemmes impart,
Or gemmes, or fruits of new-found Paradise,
Breathing all blisse and sweetning to the heart,
Teaching dumbe lips a nobler exercise.

O kisse, which soules, even soules, together tyes
By linkes of Love, and only Nature's art:
How faine would I paint thee to all men's eyes,
Or of thy gifts at least shade out some part.

But she forbids; with blushing words, she sayes,
 She builds her fame on higer-seated praise:
 But my heart burnes, I cannot silent be.

Then since, deare life, you faine would have me peace,
 And I, mad with delight, want wit to cease,
 Stop you my mouth with still still kissing me." Son. 81.

In 1592, *Daniel* produced his *Delia*, including fifty-seven sonnets, of which only two follow the Italian standard; the remainder consisting of three elegiac stanzas and a closing couplet. They display many beauties, and, being a model of easy imitation, have met with numerous copyists.

Of the *Diana* of *Constable*, a collection of sonnets in eight decades, we have already, if we consider their mediocrity, given a sufficiently copious notice. They were published in 1594, and were soon eclipsed by the *Amoretti* of *Spenser*, a series of eighty-eight sonnets, printed about the year 1595. These, from the singularity of their construction, which not only deviates from the Italian costume, but has seldom found an imitator, require, independent of their poetic value, peculiar notice. The Spenserian sonnet, then, consists of three tetrachords in alternate rhyme; the last line of the first tetrachord rhiming to the first of the second, and the last of the second to the first of the third, and the whole terminated by a couplet. That this system of rhythm often flows sweetly, and that it is often the vehicle of chaste sentiment and beautiful imagery must, in justice, be conceded to this amiable poet; but, at the same time, it is necessary to add, that it is occasionally the medium of quaintness and far-fetched conceit. A specimen, however, shall be subjoined, of which, if the first stanza be slightly tainted with affectation, the remainder will be pronounced, as well in melody and simplicity as in moral beauty, nearly perfect.

" The doubt which ye misdeeme, fayre Love, is vaine,
 That fondly feare to lose your liberty;
 When, losing one, two liberties ye gaine,
 And make him bond that bondage earst did fly.

Sweet be the bands, the which true Love doth tie
 Without constraynt, or dread of any ill:
 The gentle birde feeles no captivity
 Within her cage; but sings, and feeds her fill.
 There Pride dare not approach, nor Discord spill
 The league twixt them, that loyal Love hath bound:
 But simple Truth, and mutual Good-will,
 Seeks, with sweet Peace, to salve each others wound:
 There Fayth doth fearless dwell in brazen towre,
 And spotlesse Pleasure builds her sacred bowre."

Son. 65.

Between the sonnets of Spenser, and those of Drayton, a period of ten or eleven years, many minor bards, such as *Percy, Barnes, Barnefelde, Griffin, Smith, &c.* the titles of whose works will be found in the table of our preceding chapter, were induced to cultivate, and sometimes with tolerable success, this difficult little poem; nor are there wanting, during this period, some elegant examples of the sonnet interspersed through the works of writers of a higher rank, as, for instance, *Googe, Gascoigne, Raleigh, Breton, and Lodge*; but we shall close this criticism with a few remarks on the sonnets of the once popular poet whose productions of this kind immediately preceded the collection of Shakspeare in 1609.

The sonnets of *Drayton* which, in number sixty-three, were published under the title of "Ideas," in 1605, 8vo., are, for the most part, written on the plan of Daniel. Fifty-two exhibit three four-lined stanzas, in alternate rhyme, completed by a couplet; and eleven consist of three quatrains with two verses of *immediate*, interposed between two verses of *disjunct*, rhyme, and a terminating couplet. The versification of Drayton in these pieces is sufficiently smooth, and the sentiment is sometimes natural and pleasing, though too often injured by an ill-judged display of wit and point. With the exception, also, of two sonnets addressed to the River Anker, they possess little of what can be termed descriptive poetry.

It now remains to ascertain to which of these writers of the sonnet Shakspeare chiefly directed his attention, in choosing a model for his own compositions. Dr. Sewell and Mr. Chalmers contend that, in emulation of Spenser, he took the *Amoretti* of that poet for his

guide *; but, though we admit that he was an avowed admirer of the Fairy Queen, and that the publication of the Amoretti in 1595 might still further strengthen his attachment to this species of lyric poesy, yet we cannot accede to their position. The structure, indeed, of the Spenserian sonnet is, with the exception of a closing couplet, totally different from Shakspeare's; nor are their style and diction less dissimilar.

If we revert, however, to the sonnets of Daniel, which were published in 1592, we shall there find, as Mr. Malone had previously remarked, the prototype of Shakspeare's amatory verse. Indeed no doubt can arise, when we recollect, that all Daniel's sonnets, save two, are composed of three quatrains in alternate rhyme and a couplet, and that all Shakspeare's, one hundred and fifty-four in number, are, if we except a single instance †, of a similar description. There is, also, in Daniel, much of that tissue of abstract thought, and that reiteration of words, which so remarkably distinguish the sonnets of our bard. Of this no greater proof can be adduced than the sonnet we shall now subjoin, and which, in all its features, may be said to be truly Shakspearean: —

“ AND whither, poor *forsaken*, wilt thou go,
To go from *sorrow*, and thine own distress?
When every place presents like face of woe,
And no remove can make thy *sorrows* less?
Yet go, *forsaken*; leave these woods, these plains:
Leave her and all, and all for her, that leaves
Thee and thy love forlorn, and *both* disdains;
And of *both* wrongful deems, and ill conceives.
Seek out some *place*; and see if any *place*
Can give the least release unto thy grief:
Convey thee from the thought of thy disgrace;
Steal from thyself, and be thy care's own thief.
But yet what comforts shall I hereby gain?
Bearing the wound, I needs must feel the pain.” Son. 49.

* Chalmers's Supplemental Apology, pp. 40—43.

† Sonnet 126. It should be observed, however, that Sonnet 145, though in alternate verse, and terminated by a couplet, is in the octo-syllabic measure.

There is reason to suppose that none of Shakspeare's sonnets were written before the appearance of Daniel's "*Delia*." A few in the *Passionate Pilgrim* seem, as hath been observed, to have been suggested during the composition of the *Venus and Adonis*, and were probably penned in the interval elapsing between the publication of the *Delia* in 1592, and of the *Venus and Adonis* in 1593; for, though the earliest of his sonnets, they are still cast in the very mould which Daniel had constructed.

The difficulties, however, which attend the ascertainment of Shakspeare's model in these compositions, are nothing when compared to those which surround the enquiry as to the person to whom they are addressed. An almost impenetrable darkness rests on the question, and no effort has hitherto, in the smallest degree, tended to disperse the gloom.

When Thomas Thorpe published our author's sonnets in 1609, he accompanied them with the following mysterious dedication: —

" To The Only Begetter
Of These Ensuing Sonnets,
Mr. W. H.

All Happiness
And That Eternity Promised
By Our Ever-Living Poet
Wisheth The
Well-Wishing Adventurer
In Setting Forth,

T. T."

On the first perusal of this address, the import would seem to be, that Mr. W. H. had been the *sole object* of Shakspeare's poetry, and of the *eternity* promised by the bard. But a little attention to the language of the times in which it was written, will induce us to correct this conclusion; for as a part of our author's sonnets is most certainly addressed to a female, it is evident that W. H. could not be the *only begetter* of them in the sense which primarily suggests itself. For the true meaning of the word we are indebted to Mr. Chalmers, who observes, on the authority of Minsheu's Dictionary of 1616, that one

sense of the verb *to beget* is there given to *bring foorth*. "W. H., he continues, "was the bringer forth of the Sonnets. *Beget* is derived by Skinner from the A. S. *begettan*, *obtinere*. Johnson adopts this derivation, and sense: so that *begetter*, in the quaint language of Thorpe, the Bookseller, Pistol, the *ancient*, and such affected persons, signified the *obtainer*; as to *get*, and *getter*, in the present day, means *obtain*, and *obtainer*, or to procure, and the procurer."

We must, infer, therefore, from this explanation of the word, that Mr. W. H. had influence enough to *obtain* the manuscript from the poet, and that he lodged it in Thorpe's hands for the purpose of publication, a favour which the bookseller returned, by wishing him *all happiness and that eternity* which had been *promised* by the bard, in such glowing colours, to another, namely, to one of the immediate subjects of his sonnets.

That this is the only rational meaning which can be annexed to the word "promised," will appear, when we reflect that for Thorpe to have *wished* W. H. the *eternity* which had been promised *him* by an *ever-living* poet, would have been not only superfluous, but downright nonsense: the *eternity* of an *ever-living* poet must *necessarily ensue*, and was a proper subject of *congratulation*, but not of *wishing* or of *hope*.

It appears also that this dedication was understood in the same light by some of the earlier editors of the sonnets. Cotes, it is true, republished them in 1640 without a commentary; but when Gildon re-printed them in 1710, he gives it as his opinion that they were *all of them in praise of his mistress*; and Dr. Sewell, when he edited them in 1728, had embraced a similar idea, for he tells us, in reference to our author's example, that "A young muse must have a *mistress*, to play off the beginning of fancy; nothing being so apt to elevate the soul to a pitch of poetry, as the passion of love." *

The conclusion of these editors remained undisputed for more than half a century, when Mr. Malone, in 1780, published his Sup-

* Preface to his revised and corrected edition of Shakspeare's Works, p. 7.

plement to the Edition of Shakspeare's Plays of 1778, which includes the Sonnets of the poet, accompanied by his own notes, and those of his friends. Here, beside the opinion which he has himself avowed, he has given the conjectures of Dr. Farmer, and Mr. Tyrwhitt, and the decision of Mr. Steevens.

All these gentlemen concur in believing, that more than one hundred of our author's sonnets are addressed to a *male object*. Dr. Farmer, influenced by the *initials* in the dedication, supposes, that Mr. William Harte, the poet's nephew, was the object in question; but a reference to the Stratford Register completely overturns this hypothesis, for it there appears, that William, eldest son of William Harte, who married Shakspeare's Sister Joan, was baptized August 28th, 1600, and consequently could not be even in existence when the greater part of these compositions were written.

Mr. Tyrwhitt, founding his conjecture on a line in the twentieth sonnet, which is thus printed in the old copy,

“ A man in *hew* all *Hews* in his controlling,”

conceives that the letters W. H. were intended to imply *William Hughes*. If we recollect, however, our bard's uncontrollable passion for playing upon words; that *hew* frequently meant, in the usage of his time, *mien* and *appearance*, as well as *tint*, and that Daniel, who was probably his archetype in these pieces, has spelt it in the same way, and once, if not oftener, for the sake of emphasis, with a capital *, we shall not feel inclined to place such reliance on this supposition.

When Mr. Steevens, in 1766, annexed a reprint of the sonnets to Shakspeare's plays, from the quarto editions, he hazarded no observations on their scope or origin; but in Malone's Supplement, he ventured, in a note on the twentieth sonnet, to declare his conviction that it was addressed to a *male object*. †

* See his “Queen's Arcadia.”

† Malone's Supplement, vol. i. p. 596.

Lastly, Mr. Malone, in the Supplement just mentioned, after specifying his concurrence in the conjecture of Mr. Tyrwhitt, adds — “To this person, whoever he was, one hundred and twenty of the following poems are addressed; the remaining twenty-eight are addressed to a lady.”*

Thus the matter rested on the decision of these four celebrated commentators, who were uniform in asserting their belief, that Shakspeare had addressed the greater part of his sonnets to a man, when Mr. George Chalmers in 1797, in his “Apology for the Believers in the Shakspeare Papers,” attempted to overturn their conclusion, by endeavouring to prove that the whole of the Sonnets had been addressed by Shakspeare to Queen Elizabeth; a position which he labours to strengthen, by additional research, in his “Supplemental Apology” of 1799!

That Mr. Chalmers, however, notwithstanding all his industry and ingenuity, has failed in establishing his point, must be the acknowledgment of every one who has perused the sonnets with attention. Indeed the phraseology of Shakspeare so positively indicates a *male object*, that, if it cannot, in this respect, be reposed on, we may venture to assert, that no language, however explicit, is entitled to confidence. Nothing but extreme carelessness could have induced Gildon and Sewall to conceive that the prior part of these sonnets was directed to a *female*, and even Mr. Chalmers himself is compelled to convert his Queen into a *man*, before he can give any plausibility to his hypothesis. That Elizabeth, *in her capacity of a sovereign*, was frequently addressed in language strictly applicable to the *male* sex, is very true, and such has been the custom to almost every female *sovereign*; but that she should be thus metamorphosed, for the express purpose of wooing her by amatory sonnets, is a position which cannot be expected to obtain credit.

The question then returns upon us, *To whom are these sonnets addressed?* We agree with Farmer, Tyrwhitt, Steevens, and Malone,

* Malone's Supplement, vol. i. p. 579.

in thinking the object of the greater part of the sonnets to have been of the *male* sex; but, for the reasons already assigned, we cannot concede that either Harte or Hughes was the individual.

If we may be allowed, in our turn, to conjecture, we would fix upon LORD SOUTHAMPTON as the subject of Shakspeare's sonnets, from the first to the hundredth and twenty-sixth, inclusive.

Before we enter, however, on the quotation of such passages as are calculated to give probability to our conclusion, it will be necessary to show that, in the age of Shakspeare, the language of *love* and *friendship* was mutually convertible. The terms *lover* and *love*, indeed, were as often applied to those of the same sex who had an esteem for each other, as they are now exclusively directed to express the love of the male for the female. Thus, for instance, Ben Johnson subscribes himself the *lover* of Camden, and tells Dr. Donne, at the close of a letter to him, that he is his "ever true *lover*;" and with the same import, Drayton, in a letter to Drummond of Hawthornden, informs him, that Mr. Joseph Davis is in *love* with him. Shakspeare, in his *Dramas*, frequently adopts the same phraseology in expressing the relations of friendship: Portia, for example, in the *Merchant of Venice*, speaking of Antonio, says,

" this Antonio,
Being the bosom *lover* of my lord:"

and in *Coriolanus*, Menenius exclaims,

" I tell thee, fellow,
Thy general is my *lover*:"*

but it is to his *Poems* that we must refer for a complete and extensive proof of this perplexing ambiguity of diction, which will gradually unfold itself as we proceed to quote instances in support of Lord Southampton's being the subject of his muse.

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 331, and vol. xii. p. 219.

That Shakspeare was, at the same time, attached by *friendship*, and by *love*; that, according to the fashion of his age, he employed the same epithet for both, though, in one instance, at least, he has accurately distinguished the sexes, positively appears from the opening stanza of a sonnet in the *Passionate Pilgrim* of 1599:—

“ Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman, colour'd ill.” *

That this *better angel* was Lord Southampton, and that to him was addressed the number of sonnets mentioned above, we shall now endeavour to substantiate.

Perhaps one of the most striking proofs of this position, is the hitherto unnoticed fact, that the language of the *Dedication to the Rape of Lucrece*, and that of part of the *twenty-sixth sonnet*, are almost precisely the same.

The *Dedication* runs thus:—“ The *love* I dedicate to your Lordship is without end;—The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duty would shew greater.”

The *Sonnet* is as follows:

“ Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
To thee I send this written embassy,
To witness duty, not to show my wit.
Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it.”

Here, in the first place, it may be observed, that in his *prose*, as well as in his *verse*, our author uses the same *amatory* language; for

* Malone's Supplement, vol. i. p. 698.

he opens the dedication to His Lordship with the assurance that *his love for him is without end*. In correspondence with this declaration, the sonnet commences with this remarkable expression,—*Lord of my love*; while the residue tells us, in exact conformity with the prose address, his high sense of His Lordship's merit and his own unworthiness.

That no doubt may remain of the meaning and direction of this peculiar phraseology, we shall bring forward a few lines from the 110th sonnet, which, uniting the language of both the passages just quoted, most incontrovertibly designates the sex, and, at the same time, we think, the individual to whom they are addressed:—

“ My best of love,
Now all is done, *save what shall have no end* :
Mine appetite I never more will grind
On newer proof, to try an *older friend*,
A God in love, to whom I am confin'd.”

Before we proceed any further, however, it may be necessary to obviate an objection to our hypothesis which must immediately suggest itself. It will be said, that the first *seventeen* sonnets are written for the sole purpose of persuading their object to marry, and how could this exhortation be applicable to Lord Southampton, who, from the year 1594 to the year 1599 was the devoted admirer of *the faire Mrs. Varnon*?

To remove this apparent incongruity, we have only to recollect, that His Lordship's attachment to his mistress met with the most *decided and relentless opposition* from the Queen; and there is every reason to infer, from the *voluntary* absences of the Earl in the years 1597 and 1598, and the *extreme distress* of his mistress *on these occasions*, that the connection had been twice given up, on his part, in deference to the will of his capricious sovereign.

Shakspeare, when his friend at the age of twenty-one was first smitten with the charms of Elizabeth Vernon, was high in His Lordship's confidence and favour, as the dedication of his *Lucrece*, at this period, fully evinces. We also know, that the Earl was very indignant

at the interference of the Queen ; that he very reluctantly submitted, for some years, to her cruel restrictions in this affair ; and if, in conformity with his constitutional irritability of temper, and the natural impulse of passion on such a subject, we merely admit, his having declared what every lover would be tempted to utter on the occasion, *that if he could not marry the object of his choice, he would die single*, a complete key will be given to what has hitherto proved inexplicable.

It immediately, indeed, and most satisfactorily accounts for four circumstances, not to be explained on any other plan. It affords, in the *first* place, an easy and natural clue to the poet's expostulatory language, who, being ardently attached to his patron, wished, of course, to see him happy either in the possession of his first choice or in the arms of a second, and, therefore, reprobates, in strong terms, such a premature vow of celibacy : it gives in the *second* place, an adequate solution of the question, why so few as only seventeen sonnets, and these the earliest in the collection, are employed to enforce the argument ? for when His Lordship, on his return to London from the continent in 1598, embraced the resolution of marrying his mistress, notwithstanding the continued opposition of the Queen, all ground for further expostulation was instantly withdrawn. These seventeen sonnets, therefore, were written between the years 1594 and 1598, and were consequently among those noticed by Meres in 1598, as in private circulation : in the *third* place, it assigns a sufficient motive for withholding from public view, until after the death of the Queen, a collection of which part was written to counteract her known wishes, by exciting the Earl to form an early and independent choice : and in the *fourth* place it furnishes a cogent reason why Jaggard, in his surreptitious edition of the *Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599, did not dare to publish any of these sonnets, at a time when Southampton and his lady were imprisoned by the enraged Elizabeth, as a punishment for their clandestine union.

Having thus, satisfactorily as we think, not only removed the objection but strikingly corroborated the argument through the medium of our defence, we shall select a few passages from these initiatory

sonnets in order still further to show the *masculine* nature of their object, and to give a specimen of the poet's expostulatory freedom: —

" — Where is *she* so fair, whose *un-ear'd womb*
Disdains the *tillage of thy husbandry*?
Or who is *he* so fond, will be the tomb
Of *his* self-love, to stop posterity."

Sonnet 3.

" — thou — — —
Unlook'd on diest, unless thou *get a son*."

Son. 7.

" The world will be *thy widow* and still weep —
No love toward others in that bosom sits,
That on *himself* such murderous shame commits."

Son. 9.

" — — — — Dear my love, you know,
You had a *father*; let your son say so."

Son. 13.

" Now stand you on the top of happy hours;
And many *maiden* garlands yet unset,
With virtuous wish *would bear you living flowers*."

Son. 16.

If more instances were wanting to prove that Shakspeare's object was a *male* friend, a multitude might be quoted from the remaining sonnets; we shall content ourselves, however, with adding a few to those already given from the first seventeen: —

" O carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow,
Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen;
Him in thy course untainted do allow,
For beauty's *pattern to succeeding men*."

Son. 19.

" *His* beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
And they shall live, and *he* in them still green."

Son. 63.

The transcription of one entire sonnet will spare further quotation, as it must prove, against all the efforts of sophistry, the sex for which we contend:

" AH! wherefore with infection should HE live
And with HIS presence grace impiety,

That sin by HIM advantage should atchieve,
 And lace itself with HIS society.
 Why should false painting imitate HIS cheek,
 And steal dead seeing of HIS living hue?
 Why should poor beauty indirectly seek
 Roses of shadow, since HIS rose is true?
 Why should HE live now Nature bankrupt is,
 Beggar'd of blood to blush through lively veins?
 For she hath no exchequer now but HIS,
 And proud of many, lives upon HIS gains.
 O, HIM she stores, to show what wealth she had,
 In days long since, before these last so bad." Son. 67.

The subsequent sonnets, likewise, as far as the hundred and twenty-seventh, which appear to have been written at various periods anterior to 1609, not only bear the strongest additional testimony to the masculinity of the person addressed, but in several instances clearly evince the nature of the affection borne to him, which without any doubt consisted solely of ardent friendship and intellectual adoration. Two entire sonnets, indeed, are dedicated to the expression of these sentiments, in the first of which he tells his noble patron, that he had absorbed in his own person all the friendship which he (Shakspeare) had ever borne to the living or the dead, and he finely terms this attachment "*religious love*." In thy bosom he exclaims —

" — there reigns love and all love's loving parts,
 And all those friends which I thought buried.
 How many a holy and obsequious tear
 Hath dear religious love stolen from mine eye,
 As interest of the dead, which now appear
 But things remov'd, that hidden in thee lie!
 Thou art the grave where buried love doth live,
 Hung with the trophies of my lovers* gone;
 Who all their parts of me to thee did give;
 That due of many now is thine alone: Son. 31.

* If we consult the context of this sonnet, and recollect that Shakspeare addresses in his own person, it will be sufficiently evident that *my lovers* here can only mean *my friends*.

and in the second he says, addressing the same friend, that when Death arrests him, his verse

“ ——— for memorial still with thee shall stay.
When thou reviewest this, thou dost review
The very part was consecrate to thee.

Son. 74.

That Shakspeare looked up to his friend not only with admiration and gratitude, but with reverence and homage, and, consequently, that neither William Harte nor William Hughes, nor any person of his own rank in society could be the subject of his verse, must be evident from the passages already adduced, and will be still more so, when we weigh the import of the following extracts.

We are told, in the seventy-eighth sonnet, what, indeed, we might have supposed from the Earl's well-known munificence to literary men, that he was the theme of every muse ; and it is added, that his patronage gave dignity to learning and majesty to grace : —

“ So oft have I invoked thee for my muse,
And found such fair assistance in my verse,
As every alien pen hath got my use,
And under thee their poesy disperse.
Thine eyes, that taught the dumb on high to sing,
And heavy ignorance aloft to fly,
Have added feathers to the learned's wing,
And given grace a double majesty.
Yet be most proud of that which I compile,
Whose influence is thine, and born of thee.”

In his ninety-first sonnet the poet informs us, that he values the affection of his friend more than riches, birth, or splendour, finishing his eulogium by asserting that he was not *his peculiar* boast, but the *pride of all men* : —

“ Thy love is better than high birth to me,
Richer than wealth, prouder than garment's cost,
Of more delight than hawks or horses be,
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast.”

But in terms the most emphatic and explicit does he point to his object, in the sonnet which we are about to quote entire, distinctly marking the *sex*, the *dignity*, the *rank*, and *moral virtue* of his friend:—

“ O TRUANT Muse, what shall be thy amends,
For thy neglect of TRUTH IN BEAUTY DY'D?
BOTH TRUTH AND BEAUTY ON MY LOVE DEPENDS;
SO DOST THOU TOO, AND THEREIN DIGNIFY'D.
Make answer, Muse: wilt thou not haply say,
' Truth needs no colour, with his colour fix'd,
Beauty no pencil, beauty's truth to lay:
But best is best, if never intermix'd? —'
Because HE needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?
Excuse not silence so; for it lies in thee
To make HIM much out-live a GILDED TOMB,
And to be prais'd of ages yet to be.
Then do thy office, Muse; I teach thee how
To make HIM seem long hence as HE shows now.” Son. 101.

To whom can this sonnet, or indeed all the passages which we have quoted apply, if not to Lord Southampton, the bosom-friend, the munificent patron of Shakspeare, the noble, the elegant, the brave, the protector of literature and the theme of many a song. And let it be remembered, that if the hundreth and first sonnet be justly ascribed to Lord Southampton, or if any one of the passages which we have adduced, be fairly applicable to him, the whole of the hundred and twenty-six sonnets must necessarily apply to the same individual, for the poet has more than once affirmed this to have been his plan and object:

“ Why write I still *all one, ever the same* —
That every word doth almost tell my name. Son. 76.

—— “ *all alike my songs, and praises be*
To *one*, of *one*, still such and ever so.” Son. 105.

It may be objected, that the opening and closing sonnet of the collection which we conceive to be exclusively devoted to Lord Southampton, admit neither of reconciliation with each other, nor with the hypothesis which we wish to establish. This discrepancy,

however, will altogether vanish, if we compare the import of these sonnets with that of two others of the same series.

It will be allowed that the expressions, "*the world's fresh ornament*," the "*only herald to the gaudy spring*," and the epithets "*tender churl*," in the first sonnet, may with great propriety be applied to a young nobleman of twenty-one, just entering on a public and splendid career; but, if it be true, that these sonnets were written at various times, between the years 1594 and 1609, how comes it, that in the hundred and twenty-sixth, the last addressed to his patron, he still uses an equally youthful designation, and terms him "*my lovely boy*," an appellation certainly not then adapted to His Lordship, who, in 1609, was in his thirty-sixth year?

That the sonnets *were* written at different periods, he tells us in an apology to his noble friend for not addressing him so frequently as he used to do at the commencement of their intimacy, assigning as a reason, that as he was now the theme of various other poets, such addresses must have lost their zest:

" Our love was new, and then but in the spring,
When I was wont to greet it with my lays;
As Philomel in summer's front doth sing,
And stops his pipe in growth of riper days:
Not that the summer is less pleasant now
Than when her mournful hymns did hush the night,
But that wild musick burdens every bough,
And sweets grown common lose their dear delight,
Therefore, like her, I sometime hold my tongue,
Because I would not dull you with my song." Son. 102.

The mystery arising from the use of the juvenile epithets, he completely clears up in his hundred and eighth sonnet, where he says, that having exhausted every figure to express his patron's merit and his own affection, he is compelled to say the same things over again; that he is determined to consider him as young as when *he first hallowed his fair name*; that friendship, in fact, weighs not the advance of life, but adheres to its first conception, when youth and beauty clothed the object of its regard. In pursuance of this deter-

mination, he calls him, in this very sonnet, "*sweet boy*;" but it will be more satisfactory to copy the entire poem, in order to show, that our interpretation is not, in the smallest degree, strained: —

" WHAT'S in the brain that ink may character,
Which hath not figur'd to thee my true spirit?
What's new to speak, what new to register,
That may express my love, or thy dear merit?
Nothing, *sweet boy*; but yet, like prayers divine,
I must each day say o'er the very same;
Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine,
Even as when first I hallowed thy fair name.
So that eternal love in love's fresh case
Weighs not the dust and injury of age,
Nor gives to necessary wrinkles place,
But makes antiquity for aye his page;
Finding the first conceit of love there bred,
Where time and outward form would show it dead."

In conformity with this resolution of considering his friend as endowed whilst he lives with perpetual youth, he closes his sonnets to him, not only with the repetition of the juvenile epithet "*boy*," but he positively assures him that he has *time in his power*, that *he grows by waning*, and that *nature, as he goes onward, still plucks him back, in order to disgrace time*. The conceit is somewhat puerile, though clearly explanatory of the systematic intention of the poet:

" O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power
Dost hold time's fickle glass, his fickle hour;
Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st
Thy lovers withering, as thy sweet self grow'st;
If nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,
As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back,
She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill
May time disgrace, and wretched minutes kill."

He terminates this sonnet, however, and his series of poetical addresses to Lord Southampton, with a powerful corrective of all flattery, in reminding him that although nature "*may detain*," she cannot "*keep her treasure*," and that he must ultimately yield to death.

We must also observe, that the poet has marked the termination of these sonnets to his friend, not only by the solemn nature of the concluding sentiment, but by a striking deviation from the customary form of his composition in these pieces ; the closing poem not being constructed with alternate rhimes, but consisting of six couplets !

After thus attempting, at considerable length, and we trust with some success, to solve a mystery hitherto deemed inexplicable, we shall offer but a few observations on the object of the remaining twenty-eight sonnets.

In the first place, it is not true, as Mr. Malone has asserted, that they are *all* addressed to a female. Two, at least, have not the slightest reference to any individual ; the hundred and twenty-ninth sonnet being a general and moral declamation on the misery resulting from sensual love, and the hundred and forty-sixth, an address to his own soul of a somewhat severe and religious cast.

Of the residue, four have no very determinate application, and to whom the twenty-two are dedicated, is not now to be ascertained, and, if it were, not worth the enquiry ; for, a more worthless character, or described as such in stronger terms, no poet ever drew. We much wish, indeed, these sonnets had never been published, or that their subject could be proved to have been perfectly ideal. We are the more willing to consider them in this light, since, if we dismiss these confessional sonnets, not the slightest moral stain can rest on the character of Shakspeare ; as the frolic in Sir Thomas Lucy's park, from his youth, and the circumstances attending it, must be deemed altogether venial. It is very improbable, also, that any poet should publish such an open confession of his own culpability.

Of the grossly meretricious conduct of his mistress, of whose personal charms and accomplishments we know nothing more than that she had black eyes, black hair, and could play on the virginal, Sonnets 137. 142. and 144. bear the most indubitable evidence. Well, therefore, might the poet term her his "*false plague*," his

"*worser spirit*," his "*female evil*," and his "*bad angel*;" well might he tell her, notwithstanding the colour of her eyes and hair,

"Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place;
In nothing art thou black, save in thy deeds." Son. 131.

"For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night." Son. 147.

Well might he blame his pliability of temper, his insufficiency of judgment and resolution, well might he call himself "*past cure*," and "*frantick-mad*," when, addressing this profligate woman, he exclaims,

"Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,
That in the very refuse of thy deeds
There is such strength and warrantise of skill,
That in my mind, thy worst all best exceeds?
Who taught thee how *to make me love thee more*,
The more I hear and see just cause of hate?
O, though I love what others do abhor,
With others thou should'st not abhor my state;
If thy unworthiness rais'd love in me,
More worthy I to be belov'd by thee." * Son. 150.

Now, weighing, what almost every other personal event in our author's life establishes, the general moral beauty of his character, and reflecting, at the same time, that he was at this period a husband, and the father of a family, we cannot but feel *the most entire conviction*, that these sonnets were never directed to a *real* object: but that, notwithstanding they appear written in his own person, and two of them, indeed, (Sonnets 135. and 136.) a perpetual pun on his Christian name, they were solely intended to express, aloof from all individual application, the contrarieties, the inconsistencies, and the miseries of illicit love. Credulity itself, we think, cannot suppose

* That this series of sonnets, as well as the preceding, should be considered by Mr. Chalmers as addressed to Queen Elizabeth, is, indeed, of all conjectures, the most extraordinary!

otherwise, and, at the same time, believe that the poet was privy to their publication.

To this discussion of a subject clogged with so many difficulties, we shall now subjoin some remarks on the *poetical* merits and demerits of our author's sonnets; and here, we are irresistibly induced to notice the absurd charge against, and the inadequate defence of, sonnet-writing, brought forward by Messrs. Steevens and Malone, in the Supplement of the latter gentleman.*

The antipathy of Mr. Steevens to this species of lyric poetry, seems to have amounted to the highest pitch of extravagance. In a note on the fifty-fourth sonnet, he asks, "What has truth or nature to do with sonnets?" as if truth and nature were confined to any particular metre or mode of composition; and, in a subsequent page, he informs us that the sonnet is "a species of composition which has reduced the most exalted poets to a level with the meanest rhimers; has almost cut down Milton and Shakspeare to the standards of Pomfret and —, but the name of Pomfret is perhaps the lowest in the scale of English versifiers."† Nothing can exceed the futility and bad taste of this remark, and yet Mr. Malone has advanced no other defence of the "exalted poets" of Italy than that, "*he is slow to believe that Petrarch is without merit;*" and for Milton he offers this strange apology, — "*that he generally failed when he attempted rhyme, whether his verses assumed the shape of a sonnet, or any other form.*"‡

When we recollect, that the noblest poets of Italy, from Dante to Alfieri, have employed their talents in the construction of the sonnet, and that many of their most popular and beautiful passages have been derived through this medium; when we recollect, that the first bards of our own country, from Surrey to Southey, have followed their example with an emulation which has conferred immortality on their efforts; when we further call to mind the exquisite specimens of rhimed poetry which Milton has given us in his *L'Allegro* and

* Malone's Supplement, vol. i. p. 682.

† Ibid. p. 684.

‡ Ibid.

Il Penseroso ; and when, above all, we retrace the dignity, the simplicity, the moral sublimity of many of his sonnets, perhaps not surpassed by any other part of his works, we stand amazed at the unqualified censure on the one hand, and at the impotency of the defence on the other.

If such be the fate, then, between these commentators, of the general question, and of the one more peculiarly relative to Milton, it cannot be expected that Shakspeare should meet with milder treatment. In fact, Mr. Steevens has asserted, that his sonnets are “ composed in the highest strain of affectation, pedantry, circumlocution, and nonsense * ;” a picture which Mr. Malone endeavours to soften, by telling us that “ it appears to him overcharged :” that similar defects occur in his dramas, and that the sonnets, “ if they have no other merit, are entitled to our attention, as often illustrating obscure passages in his plays.” †

It is true that in the next paragraph he ventures to declare, that he cannot perceive that their versification is less smooth than that of Shakspeare’s other compositions, and that he can perceive perspicuity and energy in some of them ; but well might Mr. Steevens reply, that “ the case of these sonnets is certainly bad, when so little can be advanced in support of them.” ‡

Let us try, therefore, if we cannot, and that also with great ease, prove that these sonnets have been not only miserably criticised, but unmercifully abused ; and that, in point of poetical merit, they are superior to all those which preceded the era of Drummond.

In the first place, then, we altogether deny that either affectation or pedantry can, in the proper sense of the terms, be applied to the sonnets of Shakspeare. Were any modern, indeed, of the nineteenth century to adopt their language and style, he might justly be taxed with both ; but in Sidney and Shakspeare it was habit, indissoluble habit, and not affectation ; it was the diction in which they had been

* Malone’s Supplement, vol. i. p. 684.

† Ibid. p. 685.

‡ Ibid.

practised from early youth to clothe their sentiments and feelings ; it was identified with all their associations and intellectual operations ; it was the language, in fact, the mode of expression, in a greater or less degree, of all their contemporaries ; and to have stripped their thoughts of a dress, which to us appears quaint and artificial, would have been to them a painful and more elaborate task. When once, indeed, we can attribute this artificial, though often emphatic style, as we ought to do, to the universally defective taste of the age in which it sprang, and not to individual usage, we shall be prepared to do justice to injured genius, and to confess, that frequently beneath this laboured phraseology are to be found sentiments simple, natural, and touching. We may also very safely affirm of Shakspeare's sonnets, that, if their style be compared with that of his predecessors and contemporaries, in the same department of poetry, a manifest superiority must often be awarded him, on the score of force, dignity, and simplicity of expression ; qualities of which we shall very soon afford the reader some striking instances.

To a certain extent, we must admit the charge of *circumlocution*, not as applied to individual sonnets, but to the subject on which the whole series is written. The obscurities of this species of poem have almost uniformly arisen from density and compression of style, nor are the compositions of Shakspeare more than usually free from this source of defect ; but when it is considered that our author has written one hundred and twenty-six sonnets for the sole purpose of expressing his attachment to his patron, it must necessarily follow, that a subject so continually reiterated, would display no small share of circumlocution. Great ingenuity has been exhibited by the poet in varying his phraseology and ideas ; but no effort could possibly obviate the monotony, as the result of such a task.

We shall not condescend to a refutation of the *fourth* epithet, which, if at all applicable to any portion of Shakspeare's minor poems, can alone apply to Sonnets 135. and 136., which are a continued pun upon his Christian name, a species of trifling which was the peculiar vice of our author's age.

That an attempt to exhaust the subject of friendship; to say all that could be collected on the topic, would almost certainly lead, in the days of Shakspeare, to abstractions too subtle and metaphysical, and to a cast of diction sometimes too artificial and scholastic for modern taste, no person well acquainted with the progress of our literature can deny; but candour will, at the same time, admit, that the expression and versification of his sonnets are often natural, spirited, and harmonious, and that where the surface has been rendered hard and repulsive by the peculiarities of the period of their production, we have only to search beneath, in order to discover a rich ore of thought, imagery, and sentiment.

It has been stated that Shakspeare's sonnets, consisting of three elegiac quatrains and a couplet, are constructed on the plan of Daniel's; a mode of arrangement which, though bearing no similitude to the elaborate involution of the Petrarchan sonnet, may be praised for the simplicity of its form, and the easy flow of its verse; and that these technical beauties have often been preserved by our bard, and are frequently the medium through which he displays the treasures of a fervent fancy and a feeling heart, we shall now attempt, by a series of extracts, to prove.

The description of the sun in his course, his rising, meridian altitude, and setting, and his influence over the human mind, are enlivened by imagery peculiarly vivid and rich; the seventh and eighth lines especially, contain a picture of a great beauty: —

“ Lo in the orient when the gracious light
Lifts up his burning head, each under eye
Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,
Serving with looks his sacred majesty;
And having climb'd the steep-up heavenly hill,
Resembling strong youth in his middle age,
Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,
Attending on his golden pilgrimage;
But when from high-most pitch, with weary car,
Like feeble age, he reeleth from the day,
The eyes, 'fore duteous, now converted are
From his low tract, and look another way:
So thou," &c.

Son. 7.

The inevitable effects of time over every object in physical nature, reminding the poet of the disastrous changes incident to human life, he exclaims in a style highly figurative and picturesque :—

“ When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls, all silver'd o'er with white;
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves,
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard;
Then of thy beauty do I question make.” Son. 12.

A still more lovely sketch, illustrative of the uneasiness which he felt in consequence of absence from his friend, is given us in the following passage, of which the third and fourth lines are pre-eminent for the poetry of their diction :—

“ From you have I been absent in the Spring,
When proud-pied April, dress'd in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing;
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew.” Son. 98.

To the melody, perspicuity, and spirit of the versification of the next specimen, and to the exquisite turn upon the words, too much praise cannot be given. It is one amongst the numerous evidences of Lord Southampton being the subject of the great bulk of our author's sonnets; for he assures us, that he not only esteemed his lays, but gave argument and skill to his pen :—

“ *Where art thou, Muse, that thou forget'st so long*
To speak of that which gives thee all thy might?
Spend'st thou thy fury on some worthless song,
Dark'ning thy power, to lend base subjects light?

*Return, forgetful Muse, and straight redeem
In gentle numbers time so idly spent;
Sing to the ear that doth thy lays esteem,
And gives thy pen both skill and argument."*

Son. 100.

From the expressions "old rhyme," and "antique pen," in the extract which we are about to quote, it is highly probable that our bard alluded to Chaucer, certainly before his own appearance the greatest poet that England had produced. The chivalric picture in the first quatrain, is peculiarly interesting, and the cadence of the metre is harmony itself:—

*" When, in the chronicle of wasted time,
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful old rhyme,
In praise of ladies dead, and lovely knights;
Then, in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have express'd
Even such a beauty as you master now."*

Son. 106.

It is a striking proof of the poetical inferiority of the few sonnets which Shakspeare has addressed to his mistress, that we find it difficult to select more than one passage from them which does honour to his memory. Of this, however, it will be allowed, that the comparison is happy, the rhythm pleasing, and the expression clear:—

*" And truly not the morning sun of heaven
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,
Nor that full star that ushers in the even,
Doth half that glory to the sober west,
As those two mourning eyes become thy face."*

Son. 132.

In order, however, to judge satisfactorily of the merit of these poems, it will, no doubt, be deemed necessary by the reader, that a few *entire* sonnets be presented to his notice; for, though the passages just quoted, as well as numerous others which might be given, have a decided claim upon our approbation, yet, the sonnet being a

very brief composition, it will, of course, be required, that all its parts be perfect, and of equal value. That this is not always the case with these productions of our author, will be inferred from the short extracts which we have selected; but that it is so in very many instances may truly be affirmed, and will, indeed, be proved by the subsequent specimens.

So far from affectation and pedantry being the general characteristic of these pieces, impartial criticism must declare, that more frequent examples of simple, clear, and nervous diction are to be culled from them, than can be found among the sonnets of any of his contemporaries. The following, indeed, is given, not as a solitary proof, but as the exemplar of a numerous class of Shakspearean sonnets; and with the remark, that neither in this instance, nor in many others, is there, either in versification, language, or thought, the smallest deviation into the regions of affectation or conceit:—

“ No longer mourn for me when I am dead,
 Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
 Give warning to the world that I am fled
 From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell:
 Nay, if you read this line, remember not
 The hand that writ it; for I love you so,
 That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
 If thinking on me then should make you woe.
 O if, I say, you look upon this verse,
 When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
 Do not so much as my poor name rehearse;
 But let your love even with my life decay:
 Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
 And mock you with me after I am gone.”

Son. 71.

Simplicity of style, and tenderness of sentiment, form the sole features of this sonnet; but in the next, with an equal chastity of diction, are combined more energy and dignity, together with the infusion of some noble and appropriate imagery. It must also be added, that the flow and structure of the verse are singularly pleasing:—

" LET me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments. Love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove:
 O no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
 That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;
 It is the star to every wandering bark,
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
 Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 Within his bending sickle's compass come;
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
 If this be error, and upon me prov'd,
 I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd."

Son. 116.

Of a lighter though more glowing cast of poetry, both in expression and imagination, but with a slight blemish, arising from the pharmaceutical allusion in the last line, is the sonnet which we are about to quote. A trifling inaccuracy with respect to the colour of the cynorhodon, or canker-rose, afforded Mr. Steevens a pretext for the splenetic interrogation which has been recorded by us with due censure. It is somewhat strange that the beauties of the poem could not disarm the prejudices of the critic:

" O HOW much more doth beauty beauteous seem,
 By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!
 The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
 For that sweet odour which doth in it live.
 The canker-blooms have full as deep a dye,
 As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
 Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly
 When summer's breath their masked buds discloses:
 But, for their virtue only is their show,
 They live unwoo'd, and unrespected fade;
 Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;
 Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made:
 And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,
 When that shall fade, my verse distills your truth."

Son. 54.

In spirit, however, in elegance, in the skill and texture of its modulation, and beyond all, in the dignified and highly poetical

close of the third quatrain, no one of our author's sonnets excels the twenty-ninth. The ascent of the lark was a favourite subject of contemplation with the poet :—

“ WHEN in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featur'd like him, like him with friends possess'd,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee,—and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remember'd, such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.”

It is, time, however, to terminate these transcriptions, which have been already sufficiently numerous to enable the reader to form an estimate of the poet's merit in the difficult task of sonnet-writing. That many more might be brought forward, of equal value with those which we have selected, will be allowed perhaps when we state, that in the *specimens* of Mr. Ellis, the *Petrarca* of Mr. Henderson, and the *Laura* of Mr. Lofft, eleven have been chosen, of which, we find upon reference, only one among the four just now adduced.

The last production in the *minor* poems of Shakspeare, is A LOVER'S COMPLAINT, in which a forlorn damsel, seduced and deserted, relates the history of her sorrows to

“ A reverend man that graz'd his cattle nigh.”

It is written in stanzas of seven lines ; the first and third, and the second, fourth, and fifth, rhiming to each other, while the sixth and seventh form a couplet ; an arrangement exactly similar to the stanza of the Rape of Lucrece. Like many of our author's smaller pieces, it is too full of imagery and allusion, but has several passages of

great beauty and force. In the description which this forsaken fair one gives of the person and qualities of her lover, the following lines will be acknowledged to possess considerable excellence: —

“ His brown locks did hang in crooked curls,
And every light occasion of the wind
Upon his lips their silken parcels hurls. —

His qualities were beauteous as his form,
For maiden-tongu'd he was, and therefore free;
Yet, if men mov'd him, was he such a storm
As oft 'twixt May and April is to see,
When winds breathe sweet, unruly though they be. —

His real habitude gave life and grace
To appertainings and to ornament.”

These, and every other portion of the poem, however, are eclipsed by a subsequent part of the same picture, in which, as Mr. Steevens well remarks, the poet “has accidentally delineated his own character as a dramatist.”* So applicable, indeed, did the passage appear to us, as a forcible though rapid sketch of the more prominent features of the author's own genius, and of his universal influence over the human mind, that we have selected it as a motto for the second volume of this work:—

— “ On the tip of his subduing tongue
All kind of arguments and question deep,
All replication prompt, and reason strong,
For his advantage still did wake and sleep:
To make the weeper laugh, the laughter weep,
He had the dialect and different skill,
Catching all passions in his craft of will;

That he did in the general bosom reign
Of young, of old; and sexes both enchanted.”

The address which the injured mistress puts into the mouth of her

* Malone's Supplement, vol. i. p. 748. note.

seducer, when “ he ’gan besiege her,” opens in a strain of such beautiful simplicity, that we cannot avoid an expression of regret, that the defective taste of the age prevented its continuance and completion in a similar style of tenderness and ease : —

“ Gentle maid,
Have of my suffering youth some feeling pity,
And be not of my holy vows afraid.”

After relating, rather too circumstantially, the arts and hypocrisy which had been exercised for her ruin, she bursts into the following exclamation : —

“ O father, what a hell of mischief lies
In the small orb of one particular tear ! ”

Various lines, and brief extracts, of no common merit, might be detached from the Lover’s Complaint ; but enough has now been said on the *Miscellaneous Poetry* of Shakspeare, to prove that it possesses a value far beyond what has been attributed to it in modern times. The depreciation, indeed, to which it has been lately subjected, a fate so directly opposed to that which accompanied its first reception in the world, must be ascribed, in a great measure, to the unaccountable prejudices of Mr. Steevens, who, in an Advertisement prefixed to the edition of our author’s Dramas, in 1793, has made the following curious declaration : —

“ We have not reprinted the Sonnets, &c. of Shakspeare, because *the strongest act of parliament that could be framed would fail to compel readers into their service* ; notwithstanding these miscellaneous poems have derived every possible advantage from the literature and judgment of their only intelligent editor, Mr. Malone, whose implements of criticism, like the ivory rake and golden spade in Prudentius, *are on this occasion disgraced by the objects of their culture* — had Shakspeare produced no other works than these, his name would have reached us with as little celebrity as time has

conferred on that of Thomas Watson, an older *and much more elegant sonnetteer*." *

That Watson was *a much more elegant sonnetteer than Shakspeare*, is an assertion which wants no other mean for its complete refutation, than a reference to the works of the elder bard. At the period when Mr. Steevens advanced this verdict, such a reference was not within the power of one in a thousand of his readers, but all may now be referred to a very satisfactory article in the *British Bibliographer*, where Sir Egerton Brydges has transcribed seventeen of Watson's sonnets, and declares it to be his conviction, that they "want the moral cast" of Shakspeare's sonnets; "his unsophisticated materials; his pure and natural train of thought." † It may be added, that a more extended comparison would render the inferiority of Watson still further apparent, and that the Bard of Avon would figure from the juxta-position like "Hyperion to a satyr."

When Mr. Steevens compliments his brother-commentator at the expense of the poet; when he tells us, that *his implements of criticism are on this occasion disgraced by the objects of their culture*, who can avoid feeling a mingled emotion of wonder and disgust? who can, in short, forbear a smile of derision and contempt at the folly of such a declaration?

And lastly, when he assures us, that *the strongest act of parliament that could be framed would fail to compel readers into the service of our author's Miscellaneous Poetry*, and when, at the same time, we recollect, what gives us pleasure to acknowledge, the wit, the ingenuity, and research of this able editor on almost every other occasion, it will not, we trust, be deemed a work of supererogation, that we have attempted to unfold, at length, the beauties of these calumniated poems, and to refute the sweeping censure which they have so unworthily incurred; nor will the summary inference with which we shall conclude this chapter, be viewed, we hope, as either

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 30.

† British Bibliographer, No. XII. p. 16.

incorrect, or unauthorised by the previous disquisition, when we state it to consist of the following terms ; namely, that *the Poems of Shakspeare, although they are chargeable with the faults peculiar to the age in which they sprung, yet exhibit so much originality, invention, and fidelity to nature, such a rich store of moral and philosophic thought, and often, such a purity, simplicity, and grace of style, as not only deservedly placed them high in the favour of his contemporaries, but will permanently secure to them no inconsiderable share of the admiration and the gratitude of posterity.* *

* That Shakspeare himself entertained a confident hope of the immortality of his minor poems, the following, out of many instances, will sufficiently prove : —

“ So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.” Son. 18.

“ Yet, do thy worst, old Time : despite thy wrong,
My love shall in my verse ever live young.” Son. 19.

“ Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall out-live this powerful rhyme.” Son. 54.

“ Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
And delves the parallels in beauty’s brow ;
Feeds on the rarities of nature’s truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow :
And yet, to times in hope, my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.” Son. 60.

—— “ Confounding age ——
—— shall never cut from memory
My sweet love’s beauty, though my lover’s life,
His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
And they shall live, and he in them still green.” Son. 63.

“ When all the breathers of this world are dead ;
You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen),
Where breath most breathes, — even in the mouths of men.” Son. 81.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE DRESS, AND MODES OF LIVING, THE MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS, OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE METROPOLIS, DURING THE AGE OF SHAKSPEARE.

BEFORE we enter on the dramatic career of Shakspeare, a subject which we wish to preserve unbroken, and free from irrelative matter, it will be necessary, in order to prosecute our view of the costume of the Times, to give a picture in this place of the prevalent habits of the metropolis, which, with the sketch already drawn of those peculiar to the country, will form a corresponding, and, we trust, an adequate whole.

In no period of our annals, perhaps, has DRESS formed a more curious subject of enquiry, than during the reigns of Elizabeth and James the First. The Queen, who possessed an almost unbounded share of vanity and coquetry, set an example of profusion which was followed through every rank of society, and furnished by its universality, an inexhaustible theme for the puritanic satirists of the age.

Of the mutability and eccentricity of the dresses both of men and women, during this period, Harrison has provided us with a singular and interesting account, and which, as constituting a very appropriate preface to more minute particulars, we shall here transcribe.

“ Such is our mutabilitie, that to daie there is none to the Spanish guise, to morrow the French toies are most fine and delectable, yer long no such apparell as that which is after the high Alman fashion, by and by the Turkisk maner is generallie best liked of, otherwise the Morisco gowns, the Barbarian sleeves, the mandilion worne to Collie westen ward, and the short French breeches make such a comelie vesture, that except it were a dog in a doublet, you shall not see anie so disguised, as are my countrie men of England. And as these fashions are diverse, so likewise it is a world to see the costliness and the curiositie : the excesse and the vanitie : the pompe and

the braverie: the change and the varietie: and finallie the ficklenesse and the follie that is in all degrees: insomuch that nothing is more constant in England than inconstancie of attire. Oh how much cost is bestowed now adaies upon our bodies and how little upon our soules! how many sutes of apparell hath the one and how little furniture hath the other? how long time is asked in decking up of the first, and how little space left wherin to feed the later? how curious, how nice also are a number of men and women, and how hardlie can the tailer please them in making it fit for their bodies? how manie times must it be sent backe againe to him that made it? what chafing, what fretting, what reprochfull language doth the poore workman beare awaie? and manie times when he dooth nothing to it at all, yet when it is brought home againe it is verie fit and handsome; then must we put it on, then must the long seames of our hose be set by a plumb-line, then we puffe, then we blow, and finallie sweat till we drop, that our clothes may stand upon us. I will saie nothing of our heads, which sometimes are polled, sometimes curled, or suffered to grow at length like woman's lockes, manie times cut off above or under the ears round as by a wooden dish. Neither will I meddle with our varietie of beards, of which some are shaven from the chin like those of Turks, not a few cut short like to the beard of marques Otto, some made round like a rubbing brush other with a pique devant (O fine fashion) or now and then suffered to grow long, the barbers being growen to be so cunning in this behalfe as the tailers. And therefore if a man have a leane and streight face, a marquesse Ottons cut will make it broad and large; if it be platter like, a long slender beard will make it seeme the narrower; if he be wesell becke, then much heare left on the cheekes will make the owner looke big like a bowdled hen, and so grim as a goose, if Cornelius of Chalmeresford saie true: manie old men doo weare no beards at all. Some lustie courtiers also and gentlemen of courage, doo weare either rings of gold, stones, or pearle in their eares, whereby they imagine the workmanship of God not to be a little amended. But herein they rather disgrace than adorne their persons,

as by their nicenesse in apparell, for which I saie most nations doo not unjustlie deride us, as also for that we doo séeme to imitate all nations round about us, wherein we be like to the Polypus or Chameleon; and thereunto bestow most cost upon our arses, and much more than upon all the rest of our bodies, as women doo likewise upon their heads and shoulders. In women also it is most to be lamented that they doo now farre exceed the lightnesse of our men (who neverthelesse are transformed from the cap even to the verie shoo) and such staring attire as in time past was supposed meet for none but light housewives onelie, is now become an habit for chast and sober matrones. What should I saie of their doublets with pendant cod peeses on the brest full of jags and cuts, and sleeves of sundrie colours? their galligascons to beare out their bums and make their attire to sit plum round (as they terme it) about them? their fardingals, and diverslie coloured nether stocks of silke, ierdseie, and such like, whereby their bodies are rather deformed than commended? I have met with some of these trulles in London so disguised, that it hath passed my skill to discerne whether they were men or women.”*

After this philippic, we shall proceed to notice the *Dress of the Ladies*, commencing with that of the *Queen*, who is thus described by Paul Hentzner, as he saw her passing on her way to chapel, at the royal palace of Greenwich. Having mentioned the procession of barons, earls, knights, &c., he adds,—“Next came the queen, in the sixty-fifth year of her age, as we were told, very majestic; her face oblong, fair, but wrinkled; her eyes small, yet black and pleasant; her nose a little hooked; her lips narrow, and her teeth black; (a defect the English seem subject to, from their too great use of sugar) she had in her ears two pearls, with very rich drops; she wore false hair, and that red; upon her head she had a small crown;—her bosom was uncovered, as all the English ladies have it, till they marry; and she had on a necklace of exceeding fine jewels; her

* Holinshed, vol. i. p. 289, 290.—Harrison's Description of England.

hands were small, her fingers long, and her stature neither tall nor low ; her air was stately, her manner of speaking mild and obliging. That day she was dressed in white silk, bordered with pearls of the size of beans, and over it a mantle of black silk, shot with silver threads ; her train was very long, the end of it borne by a marchioness ; instead of a chain, she had an oblong collar of gold and jewels. — While we were there, W. Slawata, a Bohemian baron, had letters to present to her ; and she, after pulling off her glove, gave him her right hand to kiss, sparkling with rings and jewels. — The ladies of the court followed next to her, very handsome and well shaped, and for the most part dressed in white.” *

A few articles of the customary dress of Elizabeth, not adverted to by Hentzner, and particularly the characteristic ruff and stomacher, it may be requisite to subjoin. The former of these was profusely laced, plaited, and apparently divergent from a centre on the back of her neck ; it was very broad, extending on each side of her face, with the extremities reposing on her bosom, from which rose two wings of lawn, edged with jewels, stiffened with wire, and reaching to the top of her hair, which was moulded into the shape of a cushion, and richly covered with gems. The stomacher was strait and broad, and though leaving the bosom bare, still formed a long waist by extending downwards ; it was loaded with jewels and embossed gold, and preposterously stiff and formal.

The attachment of the Queen to dress was such, that she could not bear the idea of being rivalled, much less surpassed, in any exhibition of this kind. “ It happened,” relates Sir John Harrington, “ that Ladie M. Howarde was possessede of a rich border, powderd wyth golde and pearle, and a velvet suite belonginge thereto, which moved manie to envye ; nor did it please the Queene, who thoughte it exceeded her owne. One daye the Queene did sende privately, and got the ladies rich vesture, which she put on herself, and came forthe the

* Paul Hentzner's Travels in England : translated by Lord Orford. Edward Jeffery's edit. 8vo. 1797. p. 34, 35.

chamber amonge the ladies ; the kirtle and border was far too shorte for her Majestie's heighth ; and she askede every one ' How they likede her new-fancied suit ? ' At lengthe, she askede the owner herself, ' If it was not made too short and ill-becoming ? ' — which the poor ladie did presentlie consente to. ' Why then, if it become not me, as being too shorte, I am minded it shall never become thee, as being too fine ; so it fitteth neither well.' This sharp rebuke abashed the ladie, and she never adorned her herewith any more." *

Neither could she endure, from whatever quarter it came, any censure, direct or indirect, on her love of personal decoration. " One Sunday (April last)," says the same facetious knight, " my lorde of London preached to the Queenes Majestie, and seemede to touche on the vanitie of deckinge the bodie too finely. — Her Majestie tolde the ladies, that ' If the bishope helde more discourse on suche matters, shee wolde fitte him for heaven, but he shoulde walke thither withoute a staffe, and leave his mantle behind him : ' perchance the bishope hathe never soughte her Highnesse wardrobe, or he woulde have chosen another texte." †

Of this costly wardrobe it is recorded in Chamberlaine's epistolary notices, that it consisted of more than two thousand gowns, with all things answerable ‡ ; and Mr. Steevens, commenting on a passage in *Cymbeline*, where Imogen exclaims—

" Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion ;
And, for I am richer than to hang by the walls,
I must be ripp'd,"—

gives us the following interesting illustration.

" Clothes were not formerly, as at present, made of slight materials, were not kept in drawers, or given away as soon as lapse of time or change of fashion had impaired their value. On the contrary, they were hung up on wooden pegs in a room appropriated to the sole

* *Nugæ Antiquæ apud Park*, vol. i. p. 361.

† *Ibid.* p. 118.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 170.

purpose of receiving them; and though such cast-off things as were composed of *rich* substances, were occasionally *ripped* for domestick uses, (viz. mantles for infants, vests for children, and counterpanes for beds) articles of inferior quality were suffered to *hang by the walls*, till age and moths had destroyed what pride would not permit to be worn by servants or poor relations.

“ When a boy, at an ancient mansion-house in Suffolk, I saw one of these repositories, which (thanks to a succession of old maids !) had been preserved, with superstitious reverence, for almost a century and a half.

“ When Queen Elizabeth died, she was found to have left above three thousand dresses behind her.” *

With such a model before them, it may easily be credited, that our fair country-women vied with each other in the luxury, variety, and splendour of their dress. Shakspeare has noticed most of their eccentricities in this way, and a few remarks on his allusions, with some invectives from less good-tempered observers, will sufficiently illustrate the subject.

Benedict, describing the woman of his choice, says, “ her hair shall be of what colour it please God †;” an oblique stroke at a very prevalent fashion in Shakspeare’s time of colouring or dying the hair, and which, from its general adoption, not only excited the shaft of the satirist, but the reprobation of the pulpit. Nor were the ladies content with disfiguring their *own* hair, but so universally dismissed it for that of others, that it was a common practice with them, as Stubbes asserts in his *Anatomie of Abuses*, to allure children who had beautiful hair to private places, in order to deprive them of their envied locks.

That the dead were frequently rifled for this purpose, our poet has told us in more places than one; thus, in his sixty-eighth sonnet, he says—

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 526, 527. note 2.

† Ibid. vol. vi. p. 63. *Much Ado About Nothing*, act ii. sc. 3.

—— “ the golden tresses of the dead,
 The right of sepulchres, were shorn away,
 To live a second life on second head,
 ‘ And ’ beauty’s dead fleece made another gay ;”

and he repeats the charge in his *Merchant of Venice*,—

“ So are those crisped snaky golden locks,
 Which make such wanton gambols with the wind,
 Upon supposed fairness, often known
 To be the dowry of a second head,
 The skull that bred them in the sepulchre.” *

The hair, when thus obtained, was often dyed of a sandy colour, in compliment to the Queen, whose locks were of that tint ; and these false ornaments or “ thatches,” as Timon terms them, were called *periwigs* ; thus Julia, in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, contemplating the picture of her rival, observes,

“ Her hair is auburn, mine is perfect yellow :
 If that be all the difference in his love,
 I’ll get me such a colour’d periwig.” †

Periwigs, which were first introduced into England about 1572, were to be had of all colours ; for an old satirist, speaking of his countrywomen, says, “ It is a woonder more than ordinary to beholde theyr perewigs of sundry collours.” ‡ A distinction, however, in wearing the hair, as well as in other articles of dress, existed between the matrons and unmarried women. “ Gentlewomen virgins,” observes Fines Moryson, “ weare gownes close to the body, and aprons of fine linen, and go *bareheaded, with their hair curiously knotted, and raised at the forehead, but many* (against the cold, as they say,) *weare caps of hair that is not their own.*” §

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 314. Act iii. sc. 2.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 289. Act iv. sc. 4.

‡ “ The English Ape, The Italian Imitation, The Foote-Steppes of Fraunce,” a black-letter tract, dated 1588 ; for an account of which see Beloe’s Anecdotes, vol. ii. p. 260.

§ Vide Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. vi. p. 64. note by Malone.

To some of the various coverings for the hair our poet refers in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, when Falstaff, complimenting Mrs. Ford, exclaims, "thou hast the right arched bent of the brow, that becomes the *ship-tire*, the *tire-valiant*, or any *tire of Venetian admittance*." *

The *ship-tire* appears to have been an open flaunting head-dress, with scarfs or ribands floating in the air like streamers, or as Fenton himself, in the fifth act of this play, describes it,

" With ribbons *pendant* flaring 'bout her head."

The *tire-valiant*, if the text be correct, must mean a dress still more shewy and ostentatious; and we know that feathers, jewels, and gold and silver ornaments, were common decorations in these days of gorgeous finery. Nash, in 1594, speaks of "lawn caps" with "snow-resembled silver curlings †;" and a sarcastic poet in 1595 describes

— " flaming heads with staring haire,
' With' wyers turnde like horns of ram —
To peacockes I compare them right,
That glorieth in their feathers bright." ‡

Venice and Paris were the sources of fashion, and both occasionally furnished a more chaste and elegant costume for the female head than the objects of Falstaff's encomium. The "French hood," a favourite of the times, consisted simply of gauze or muslin, reaching from the back of the head down over the forehead, and leaving the hair exposed on each side. § Cauls, or nets of gold thread, were thrown with much taste over their glossy tresses, and attracted the notice of the satirist just quoted:—

" These glittering caules of golden plate
Wherewith their heads are richlie dect,
Makes them to seeme an angels mate
In judgment of the simple sect." ||

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 128.

† "Christ's Tears over Jerusalem," 4to. 1594.

‡ "Quippes for upstart new fangled Gentlewomen: or a Glasse, to view the pride of vain glorious Women," 4to. 1595.—Vide *Restituta*, vol. iii. p. 255.

§ Vide Strutt's Customs, vol. iii. plate 22. fig. 9.

|| *Restituta*, vol. iii. p. 256.

Another happy mode of embellishment consisted of placing gracefully on the hair artificial peascods, which were represented open, with rows of pearls for peas.

The lady's morning-cap was usually a mob*; and the citizens' wives wore either a splendid velvet cap†, or what was called the 'Minever cap,' with peaks three inches high, white, and three-cornered.

Paint was openly used for the face :

“ These painted faces which they weare,
Can any tell from whence they came;” ‡

and masks and mufflers were in general use; the former, according to Stubbes, were made of velvet, “ wherewith when they ride abroad they cover all their faces, having holes made in them against their eyes, whereout they looke. So that if a man that knew not their guise before, should chauce to meet one of them, he would think he met a monster or a Devil, for face he can shew none, but two broad holes against their eyes, with glasses in them §;” the latter covered the lower part of the face only, as far as the nose, and had the appearance of a linen bandage. So common were these female masks in Shakspeare's days, that the author of *Quippes for newfangled Gentlewomen*, after remarking that they were the offspring not of modesty but of pride, informs us that

—— “ on each wight now are they seene,
The tallow-pale, the browning bay,
The swarthy blacke, the grassie-greene,
The pudding-red, the dapple-graie.” ||

The *ruff*, already partly described under the dress of Elizabeth, was common to both sexes; but under the fostering care of the ladies, attained, in stiffness, fineness, and dimensions, the most extravagant

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 154.

† Strutt's Customs, vol. iii. plate 12.

‡ Restituta, vol. iii. p. 256.

§ Anatomie of Abuses, 4to. p. 59.

|| Restituta, vol. iii. p. 257.

pitch of absurdity. It reached behind to the very top of the head, and the tenuity of the lawn or cambrick of which it was made was such, that Stowe prophesies, they would shortly "wear ruffles of a spider's web." In order to support so slender a fabric, a great quantity of starch became necessary, the skilful use of which was introduced by a Mrs. Dingen Van Plesse in 1564, who taught her art for a premium of five guineas. Starching was subsequently improved by the introduction of various colours, one of which, the *yellow* die, being the invention of a Mrs. Turner, who was afterwards concerned in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, was dismissed with abhorrence from the fashionable world, in consequence of this abandoned woman being executed at Tyburn in a ruff of her favourite tint. The extreme indignation with which Stubbes speaks of the use of starch is highly amusing:—"One arch or pillar," says he, "wherewith the devil's kingdome of great ruffles is underpropped, is a certain kind of liquid matter which they call *startch*, wherein the devill hath learned them to wash and die their ruffles, which, being drie, will stand stiff and inflexible about their neckes. And this starch they make of divers substances—of all colours and hues, as white, redde, blew, purple, and the like."

We are further informed by the same vehement satirist, that the ruff had the additional support of an underpropper called a *suppertasse*, and that its plaits were adjusted by poking-sticks made of iron, steel, or silver, that, when used, were heated in the fire, a custom against which he expresses his wrath by relating a most curious story of a gentlewoman of Antwerp who had her ruff poked by the devil on the 27th of May, 1582, "the sound whereof," says he, "is blowne through all the world, and is yet fresh in every mans memory." It appears that this unfortunate lady, being invited to a wedding, could not, although she employed two celebrated laundresses, get her ruff plaited according to her taste, upon which, proceeds Stubbes, "she fell to sweare and teare, to curse and ban, casting the ruffles under feete, and wishing that the devill might take her when shee did wear any neck-erchers againe;" a wish which was speedily accomplished; for the devil,

assuming the form of a beautiful young man, made his appearance under the character of a suitor, and enquiring the cause of her agitation, "tooke in hande the setting of her ruffes, which he performed to her great contentation and liking; insomuch, as she, looking herselfe in a glasse (as the devill bad her) became greatly inamoured with him. This done, the young man kissed her, in the doing whereof, he writhed her neck in sunder, so she died miserably; her body being straight waies changed into blew and black colours, most uggesome to beholde, and her face (which before was so amorous) became most deformed and fearfull to looke upon. This being knowne in the citie, great preparation was made for her buriall, and a rich coffin was provided, and her fearfull body was laide therein, and covered very sumptuously. Foure men immediately assayed to lift up the corpes, but could not move it; then sixe attempted the like, but could not once stirre it from the place where it stood. Whereat the standers-by marvelling, causing the coffin to be opened to see the cause thereof: where they found the body to be taken away, and a blacke catte, very leane and deformed, sitting in the coffin, setting of great ruffes, and frizling of haire, to the greate feare and woonder of all the beholders." *

The waist was beyond all proportion long, the bodice or stays terminating at the bottom in a point, and having in the fore part a pocket, for money, needle-work, and billets, a fashion to which Proteus alludes in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, when he tells Valentine

" Thy letters _____
 _____ shall be deliver'd
 Even in the milk-white bosom of thy love." †

✓ Gowns were made of the richest materials, with velvet capes embroidered with bugelles, and with the sleeves curiously cut ‡; the

* Anatomie of Abuses, 4to. p. 43.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 248.

‡ See Katharine's Gown, in Taming of the Shrew, Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ix. p. 157.

fashionable petticoat was the Scottish fardingale, made of cloth, taffety, satin, or silk, and of enormous bulk, so that when an Elizabethan lady was dressed in one of these, with the gown, as was usually the case, stuffed about the shoulders, and the ruffe in the first style of the day, her appearance was truly formidable. Over all was frequently thrown a kirtle, mantle, or surcoat, with or without a head, formed of silk or velvet, and richly bordered with lace.

Silk-stockings, which were first worn by the Queen in 1560, Mrs. Montagu, her silk-woman, having presented her with a pair of this material in that year, soon became almost universal among the ladies, and formed one of the most expensive articles of their dress.

Shoes with very high heels, in imitation of the Venetian *chopine*, a species of stilt sometimes better than a foot in height, was the prevalent mode, and carried, for the sake of increasing the stature, to a most ridiculous excess. It never reached, indeed, this enormous dimension in England, but seems, from a passage in Hamlet, to have been of such a definite size, as to admit of a reference to it as a mark of admeasurement, for the Prince remarks, "Your Ladyship is nearer to heaven, than when I saw you last, *by the altitude of a chopine.*" *

Fans, constructed of ostrich feathers, inserted into handles of gold, silver, or ivory, and wrought with great skill in various elegant forms, were so commonly worn that the author of "Quippes for upstart newfangled Gentlewomen," 1595, exclaims, —

"Were fannes, and flappes of feathers, found
To flit away the flisking flies, —

The wit of women we might praise,

But seeing they are still in hand,

In house, in field, in church, in street;

In summer, winter, water, land,

In colde, in heate, in drie, in weat;

I judge they are for wives such tooles

As bables are, in playes, for fooles." †

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 144. — Mr. Douce has given a plate of the *chopine*, in his second volume on Shakspeare, p. 234.

† Restituta, vol. iii. p. 257.

Silver and ivory handles were usual among ladies of the middle class of society; but in the higher ranks they were frequently decorated with gems, and the Queen had several new-year's gifts of fans, the handles of which were studded with diamonds and other jewels.* Shakspeare has many allusions to fans of feathers†; and even hints, in his *Henry the Eighth*, that the coxcombs of his day were not ashamed to adopt their use.‡

Perfumed bracelets, necklaces, and gloves, were favourite articles. "Gloves as sweet as damask roses," form part of the stock of *Auto-lycus*, and *Mopsa* tells the clown, that he promised her "a pair of sweet gloves."§ The Queen in this, as in most other luxuries of dress, set the fashion; for *Howes* informs us, that in the fifteenth year of her reign, *Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford*, presented her with a pair of perfumed gloves trimmed with four tufts of rose-coloured silk, in which she took such pleasure that she was always painted with those gloves on her hands, and that their scent was so exquisite that it was ever after called the *Earl of Oxford's* perfume.||

To these notices it may be added, that a small looking-glass pendent from the girdle¶, a pocket-handkerchief richly wrought with gold and silver, and a love-lock hanging wantonly over the shoulder, were customarily exhibited by the fashionable female.

Burton, writing at the close of the Shakspearean era, has given us a brief but exact enumeration of the feminine allurements of his day; a passage which, whilst it adds a few new particulars, will

* "In a list of jewels given to the Queen at New-years tide, 1589, is 'A fanne of fethers, white and redd, the handle of golde, inamaled with a halfe moone of mother of perles, within that a halfe moone garnished with sparks of dyamonds, and a few seede perles on the one side, having her Majestie's picture within it; and on the back-side a device with a crowe over it. Geven by Sir Frauncis Drake.'" — *Nichols's Progresses*, vol. ii. p. 54. note.

† Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. v. p. 80.; vol. xi. p. 261. &c. &c.

‡ Ibid. vol. xv. p. 46. Act i. sc. 3.

§ Ibid. vol. ix. p. 349. 352. *Winter's Tale*, act iv. sc. 3.

|| *Stowe's Annals*, by *Howes*, edit. 1614. p. 868.

¶ Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. vii. p. 72. note.

furnish an excellent recapitulation of what has been already advanced.

“ Why,” exclaims he, “ do they decorate themselves with artificial flowers, the various colours of herbs, needle works of exquisite skill, quaint devices, and perfume their persons, wear inestimable riches in precious stones, crown themselves with gold and silver, use coronets and tires of several fashions ; deck themselves with pendants, bracelets, ear-rings, chains, girdles, rings, pins, spangles, embroideries, shadows, rebatoes, versicoler ribands ? Why do they make such glorious shews with their scarfs, feathers, fans, masks, furs, laces, tiffanies, ruffs, falls, calls, cuffs, damasks, velvets, tinsels, cloth of gold, silver tissue ? Such setting up with corks, straitening with whale bones ; why, it is but as a day-net catcheth larks, to make young ones stoop unto them. — And when they are disappointed, they dissolve into tears, which they wipe away like sweat : weep with one eye, laugh with the other ; or as children, weep and cry they can both together : and as much pity is to be taken of a woman weeping as of a goose going barefoot.” *

We have seen in the extract from Harrison, at the commencement of this chapter, that a great portion of it is employed in satirising the extravagance and folly of the *male-dress* of his times, and the adduction of further particulars will serve but to strengthen the propriety of his invective, and to prove, what will scarcely be credited, that, in the absurdity and frivolity of personal ornament, the men far surpassed the other sex.

Though there is reason to conclude that this taste for expensive and frivolous declaration, was originally derived from the reign of

* *Anatomy of Melancholy*, folio, 8th edit. p. 293, 294. 307. — In Vaughan’s “ *Golden Grove*,” also, the first edition of which appeared in 1600, may be found some curious notices on “ *superfluitie of apparell* ” with regard to both sexes ; he tells us that the women in the early ages of the world “ *imitated not hermaphrodites, in wearing of men’s doublets. They wore no chaines of gold, &c. — they went not clothed in velvet gownes, nor in chamlet peticotes. They smelt not unto pomander, civet, muske, and such lyke trumperies.*”

Elizabeth, yet was it even still more encouraged by James; for though he set no example of profusion of this kind in his own person, Sir Arthur Wheldon declaring that he was "in his apparrell so constant, as by his good will he would never change his cloathes till very ragges; his fashion never: insomuch, as one bringing to him a hat of a Spanish block, he cast it from him, swearing he neither loved them nor their fashions. Another time, bringing him roses on his shoes, asked, if they would make him a ruffe-footed-dove? one yard of sixpenny ribband served that turne*;" yet was he passionately attached to dress in the persons of his courtiers; "he doth admire good fashion in cloaths;" says Lord Howard, writing to Sir John Harington in 1611; "I would wish you to be well trimmed; get a new jerkin well bordered, and not too short; the King saith, he liketh a flowing garment; be sure it be not all of one sort, but diversly coloured, the collar falling somewhat down, and your ruff well stiffend and bushy. We have lately had many gallants who failed in their suits, for want of due observance of these matters. The King is nicely heedfull of such points, and dwelleth on good looks and handsome accoutrements. Eighteen servants were lately discharged, and many more will be discarded, who are not to his liking in these matters. — Robert Carr is now most likely to win the Prince's affection, and dothe it wonderously in a little time. The Prince leaneth on his arm, pinches his cheek, smoothes his ruffled garment, and, when he looketh at Carr, directeth discourse to divers others. This young man dothe much study all art and device; he hath changed his tailors and tiremen many times, and all to please the Prince, who laugheth at the long grown fashion of our young courtiers, and wisheth for change for every day." †

King James's love of finery seems to have been imbibed, not only by his courtiers, but by all his youthful subjects; for from the crown

* The Court and Character of King James. Written and taken by Sir A. W. being an eye, and ear witnesse. 12mo. 1650. p. 180, 181.

† *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. pp. 391, 392.

of his head to the sole of his foot, nothing can exceed the fantastic attire by which the beau of this period was distinguished. His *hair* was worn long and flowing, "whose length," says Decker, "before the rigorous edge of any puritanical pair of scissors should shorten the breadth of a finger, let the three housewifely spinsters of destiny rather curtail the thread of thy life;—let it play openly with the lascivious wind, even on the top of your shoulders."* His *hat* was made of silk, velvet, taffeta, or beaver, the last being the most expensive; the crown was high, and narrow toward the top, "like the speare or shaft of a steeple," observes Stubbes, "standing a quarter of a yard above their heads;" the edges, and sometimes the whole hat, were embroidered with gold and silver, to which a costly hat-band sparkling with gems, and a lofty plume of feathers, were generally added. It appears, from a passage in the *Taming of the Shrew*, that to these high hats the name of *copatain* was given; for Vincentio, surprised at Tranio being dressed as a gentleman, exclaims, "O fine villain! A silken doublet! a velvet hose! a scarlet cloak! and a *copatain hat*! †" a word which Mr. Steevens considers as synonymous with a high *copt* hat. It was usual with gallants to wear *gloves* in their hats, as a memorial of their ladies favour. ‡

Of the *beard* and its numerous forms, we have already seen a curious detail by Harrison, to which we may subjoin, that it was customary to dye it of various colours §, and to mould it into various forms, according to the profession, age, or fancy of the wearer. Red was one of the most fashionable tints ||; a beard of "formal cut" distinguished the justice ¶ and the judge; a rough bushy beard marked

* Decker's *Gull's Hornbook*, reprint of 1812, pp. 83. 87.

† Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. ix. p. 175.

‡ Ibid. vol. xvii. p. 467.—Caps were usually worn by the lower class, see vol. vi. p. 89.

§ Ibid. vol. vi. p. 357.

|| Bottom, in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, mentions also a straw-coloured, an orange-tawny, a purple-in-grain, and a perfect yellow, beard, act i. sc. 2.

¶ See Jaques's description of the Seven Ages in *As You Like It*, act ii. sc. 7.

the clown, and a *spade-beard*, or a *stiletto*, or dagger-shaped beard, graced the soldier. "It is observable," remarks Mr. Malone, "that our author's patron, Henry Earl of Southampton, who spent much of his time in camps, is drawn with the latter of these beards; and his unfortunate friend, Lord Essex, is constantly represented with the former." *

Of the effeminate fashions of this age, perhaps the most effeminate was the custom of wearing jewels and roses in the ears, or about the neck, and of cherishing a long lock of hair under the left ear, called a love-lock. The first and least offensive of these decorations, the use of jewels and rings in the ear, was general through the upper and middle ranks, nor was it very uncommon to see gems worn appended to a riband round the neck. † Roses were almost always an appendage of the love-lock, but these were, for the most part, formed of riband, yet we are told by Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, "that it was once the fashion to stick *real flowers* in the ear." The love-lock, with its termination in a silken rose, had become so notorious, that Prynne at length wrote an express treatise against it, which he entitled, *The Unloveliness of Love-locks, and long womanish Hair*, 1628. ‡

The *ruff* never reached the extravagant dimensions of that in the other sex, yet it gradually acquired such magnitude as to offend the eye of Elizabeth, who, in one of her sumptuary laws, ordered it, when reaching beyond "a nayle of a yeard in depth," to be clipped. §

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xii. p. 399.

† Jervis Markham has an allusion to this custom in his Treatise entitled *Honour in Perfection*, 4to., p. 18.

‡ Frequent references to these fashions may be found in our author; vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vi. p. 162; vol. ix. p. 242, and vol. x. p. 855. Jonson and Fletcher also abound with them; and see that curious exposition of fashionable follies, Decker's *Gull's Hornbook*, Reprint, p. 86. 137, &c.

§ Vide Stowe's *Annals*, p. 869.—The divisions, or pieces of the brim of the collar or ruffe, were, according to Cotgrave's Dictionary, 1611, termed *piccadillies*. And the author of *London and its Environs* described, tells us, that in *Piccadilly* "there were formerly no houses, and only one shop for Spanish ruffs, which was called the *Piccadilly* or *ruff* shop." Vide vol. v.

The *doublet and hose*, to the eighth year of Elizabeth's reign, had been of an enormous size, especially the breeches, which being puckered, stuffed, bolstered and distended with wool and hair, attained a magnitude so preposterous, that, as Strutt relates on the authority of a MS. in the Harleian collection, "there actually was a scaffold erected round the inside of the parliament-house for the accommodation of such members as wore those huge breeches; and that the said scaffold was taken down when, in the eighth of Elizabeth, those absurdities went out of fashion." *

The doublet was then greatly reduced in size, yet so hard-quilted, that Stubbes says, the wearer could not bow himself to the ground, so stiff and sturdy it stood about him. It was made of cloth, silk or satin, fitting the body like a waistcoat, surmounted by a large cape, and accompanied either with long close sleeves, or with very wide ones, called Danish sleeves. The breeches, hose, or gallygaskins, now shrunk in their bulk, were either made close to the form, or rendered moderately round by stuffing; the former, which ended far above the knee, were often made of crimson satin, cut and embroidered †, and the latter had frequently a most indelicate appendage, to which our poet has too often indulged the licence of allusion. ‡ A cloak surmounting the whole, of the richest materials, and generally embroidered with gold or silver, was worn buttoned over the shoulder. Fox-skins,

* Strutt's Customs, vol. iii. p. 85.—The next age saw this absurd mode of dress revived: and Bulmer, in his *Pedigree of the English Gallant*, relates, that, when the law was in force against the use of *bags for stuffing breeches*, a man was brought before a court of justice, charged with wearing the prohibited article, upon which, in order to refute the accusation, he produced from within "a pair of sheets, two table cloths, ten napkins, four shirts, a brush, a glass, a comb, night-caps, &c." p. 548.

† In the first volume of the *Antiquarian Repertory*, it is recorded, that "Nailer came through London appparelled in a doublet and galey-gascoigne breeches, all of crimsin satin, cut and raced."

‡ *Luc.* A round hose, madam, now's not worth a pin,
Unless you have a cod-piece to stick pins on.

Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 236.

lamb-skins, and sables were in use as facings, but the latter were restricted to the nobility, none under the rank of an earl being allowed to wear sables, which were so expensive, that an old writer of 1577, speaking of the luxury of the times, says, "that a thousand ducates were sometimes given for a *face of sables**;" consequently, as Mr. Malone has remarked, "a suit trimmed with sables was, in Shakespeare's time, the richest dress worn by men in England."†

The stockings, or hose as they were called in common with the breeches, consisted either of woven silk, or were cut out by the taylor "from silke, velvet, damaske, or other precious stuffe."‡ They were gartered, externally, and below the knee, with materials of such expensive quality, that Howes tells us, in his Continuation of Stowe's Chronicle, "men of *mean* rank weare *garters* and shoe-roses of more than *five pounds price*." Decker advises his gallant to "strive to fashion his legs to his silk stockings, and his proud gate to his *broad garters* §," which being so conspicuous a part of the dress, were either manufactured of gold and silver, or were made of satin and velvet with a deep gold fringe. The common people were content with worsted galloon, or what were called *caddis-garters*. || The gaudiness of attire, indeed, with regard to these articles of clothing, appears to have been carried to a most ridiculous excess; red silk-stockings, parti-coloured garters, and cross gartering, so as to represent the varied colours of the Scotch plaid, were frequently exhibited.

Nor were the shoes and boots of this period less extravagantly ostentatious. Corked shoes, or pantofles, are described by Stubbes as bearing up their wearers two inches or more from the ground, as

Thomas Wright in his "Passions of the Minde," first published in 1601, speaking of our countrymen's proneness to imitate French fashions, tells us in his chapter entitled "Discoverie of Passions in Apparell,"—"Some I have heard very contemptuously say, that scarcely a new forme of breeches appeared in the French King's kitchen but they were presently translated over into the court of England."

* Bishop's Blossoms. — Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 197.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 197.

‡ Anatomy of Abuses, p. 30.

§ Gull's Hornbook, p. 93.

|| Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xi. p. 275, note.

being of various colours, and razed, carved, cut, and stitched. They were not unfrequently fabricated of velvet, embroidered with the precious metals, and when fastened with strings, these were covered with enormous roses of riband, curiously ornamented and of great value. Thus Hamlet speaks of "Provencial roses on my razed shoes;" and it is remarkable, that, as in the present age, both shoes and slippers were worn shaped after the right and left foot. Shakspeare describes his smith

" Standing on slippers, which his nimble haste
Had falsely thrust upon contrary feet : *

and Scott, in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, observes, that he who receiveth a mischance, "will consider, whether he put not on his shirt wrong side outwards, or his *left shoe on his right foot*." †

The *boots* were, if possible, still more eccentric and costly than the shoes, resembling, in some degree, though on a larger scale, the theatric buskin of the modern stage. They were usually manufactured of russet cloth or leather, hanging loose and ruffled about the leg, with immense tops turned down and fringed, and the heel decorated with gold or silver spurs. Decker speaks of "a gilt spur and a ruffled boot;" and in another place adds,—“let it be thy prudence to have the tops of them wide as the mouth of a wallet, and those with fringed boot-hose over them to hang down to thy ancles.” ‡ Yet even this extravagance did not content those who aspired to the highest rank of fashion; for Doctor Nott, the editor of Decker's Horn-book, in a note on the last passage which we have quoted, informs us, on the authority of Stubbes's *Anatomie of Abuses*, that these boots were often "made of cloth fine enough for any hand, or ruff; and so large, that the quantity used would nearly make a shirt: they were embroidered in gold and silver; having on them the

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 212.

† Quoted by Dr. Farmer: Reed's Shakspeare, vol. x. p. 481.

‡ Decker's Gull's Horn-book, reprint, pp. 13. 76.

figures of birds, animals, and antiques in various coloured silks : the needle-work alone of them would cost from four to * ten pounds." Shakspeare alludes to the large boots with ruffles, or loose tops, which were frequently called *lugged boots*, in *All's Well That Ends Well*, act iii. sc. 2. ; and we find, from the same authority, that boots closely fitting the leg were sometimes worn ; for Falstaff, in *Henry the Fourth*, Part II., accounting for the Prince's attachment to Poins, mentions, among his other qualifications, that he " wears his boot very smooth, like unto the sign of the leg." †

Nor was the interior clothing of the beau less sumptuous and expensive than his exterior apparel ; his shirts, relates that minute observer, Stubbes, were made of " camericke, Hollande, lawne, or els of the finest cloth that may be got." And were so wrought with " needle-worke of silke, and so curiously stitched with other knackes beside, that their price would sometimes amount to ten pounds." ‡

No gentleman was considered as dressed without his dagger and rapier ; the former, richly gilt and ornamented, was worn at the back : thus Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*, exclaims,

" This dagger hath mista'en, — for, lo ! his house
Is empty on the back of Montague —
And is mis-sheathed in my daughter's bosom : " §

and an old play, of the date 1570, expressly tells us,

" Thou must weare thy sword by thy side,
And thy *dagger* handsomly *at thy backe* : " ||

The *rapier*, or small sword, which had been known in this country from the reign of Henry the Eighth, or even earlier, entirely super-

* See also, Strutt's *Dress and Habits of the People of England*, vol. ii. p. 263.

† Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. xii. p. 102. Act ii. sc. 4.

‡ Vide Andrews's *History of Great Britain*, vol. ii. p. 301.

§ Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. xx. p. 256.

|| " The Longer thou Livest the more Fool thou art."—Vide *Biographia Dramatica*, vol. ii. p. 193.

seded, about the 20th of Elizabeth, the use of the heavy or two-handed sword and buckler; an event which Justice Shallow, in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, is represented as regretting.* Though occasionally used as an offensive weapon, and certainly a more dangerous instrument than its predecessor, it was chiefly worn as a splendid ornament, the hilt and scabbard being profusely, and often elegantly decorated. It was also the custom to wear these swords when dancing, as appears from a passage in *All's Well That Ends Well*, where Bertram says,

“ I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock—
Till honour be bought up, and *no sword worn*,
But one to dance with;” †

an allusion which has received most satisfactory illustration from Mr. Douce, in an extract taken from Stafforde's *Briefe conceipt of English pollicy*, 1581, 4to., in which not only this practice is mentioned, but the preceding fashion of the heavy sword and buckler is particularly noticed:—“ I thinke wee were as much dread or more of our enemies, when our gentlemen went simply, and our serving men plainely, without cuts or gards, bearing their *heavy swords and buckelers* on their thighs, insted of cuts and gardes and *light dauns-ing swordes*; and when they rode, carrying good speares in theyr hands in stede of white rods, which they cary now more like ladies or

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. v. pp. 75, 76.—To the old two-handed sword, and to the monstrous stuffed hose, Ben Jonson most humorously refers us, in his *Epicæne; or, the Silent Woman*, where True-wit frightens Daw by an exaggerated description of Sir Amorous La Foole's warlike attire. “ He has got,” says he, “ somebody's *old two-hand sword*, to mow you off at the knees: and that sword hath spawn'd such a dagger! — But then he is so hung with pikes, halberds, petronels, callivers, and muskets, that he looks like a justice of peace's hall: a man of two thousand a year is not cess'd at so many weapons as he has on. There was never fencer challeng'd at so many several foils. You would think he meant to murder all St. Pulchre's parish. If he could but victual himself for half a year in his *breeches*, he is sufficiently arm'd to overrun a country.”—Act iv. sc. 5.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. viii. p. 257. Act ii. sc. 1.

gentlewomen than men ; all which delicacyes maketh our men cleane effeminate and without strength.”*

It soon became the fashion to wear these rapiers of such an enormous length, that government was obliged to interfere, and a sumptuary law was passed to limit these weapons to *three feet*, which was published by proclamation, together with one for the curtailment of ruffs. “ He,” says Stowe, “ was held the greatest gallant, that had the deepest ruffe and longest rapier : the offence to the eye of the one, and the hurt unto the life of the subject that came by the other, caused her Majesty to make proclamation against them both, and to place selected grave citizens at every gate to cut the ruffles, and breake the rapiers’ points of all passengers that exceeded a yeard in length of their rapiers.”† This regulation occasioned a whimsical circumstance, related by Lord Talbot, in a letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury, dated June 23d, 1580 : — “ The French Imbasidore, Mounswere Mouiser, (Malvoisier) ridinge to take the ayer, in his returne cam thowrowe Smithfild ; and ther, at the bars, was steayed by thos offisers that sitteth to cut sours, by reason his raper was longer than the statute : He was in a great feaurie, and dreawe his raper ; in the meane season my Lord Henry Seamore cam, and so steayed the matt^r : Hir Ma^{tie} is greatlie ofended wth the ofisers, in that they wanted jugement.”‡

This account of the *male fashionable* dress, during the days of Shakspeare, has sufficiently borne out the assertion which we made at its commencement,—that in extravagance and frivolity it surpassed the caprice and expenditure of the other sex ; a charge which is repeated by Burton at the close of this era ; for, exclaiming against the luxury of fine clothes, he remarks, “ women are bad, and men worse. — So ridiculous we are in our attires, and for cost so excessive, that as Hierom said of old,—’tis an ordinary thing to put

* Douce’s Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 315.

† Stowe’s Annals, p. 869.

‡ Lodge’s Illustrations of British History, vol. ii. p. 228.

a thousand oaks, and an hundred oxen into a suit of apparel, to wear a whole mannor on his back. What with shoo-ties, hangers, points, caps and feathers, scarfs, bands, cuffs, &c., in a short space their whole patrimonies are consumed. Heliogabalus is taxed by Lamprius, and admired in his age for wearing jewels in his shoos, a common thing in our times, not for Emperors and Princes, but almost for serving-men and taylors: all the flowres, stars, constellations, gold and pretious stones do condescend to set out their shoos." *

The dress of the citizen, indeed, was, if less elegant, equally showy, and sometimes fully as expensive as that of the man of fashion. The medium habit may, with great probability, be considered as sketched in the following humorous tale, derived from a popular pamphlet printed in 1609:—

" A citizen, for recreation-sake,
To see the country would a journey take
Some dozen mile, or very little more;
Taking his leave with friends two months before,
With drinking healths, and shaking by the hand,
As he had travail'd to some new-found-land.
Well: taking horse with very much ado,
London he leaveth for a day or two:
And as he rideth, meets upon the way
Such as (what haste soever) bid men stay.
" Sirrah! (says one) stand, and your purse deliver,
I am a *taker*, thou must be a *giver*."
Unto a wood hard by they hale him in,
And rife him unto his very skin.
" Maisters, (quoth he) pray heare me ere you go:
For you have rob'd more now than you do know.
My horse, in troth, I borrow'd of my brother:
The bridle and the saddle, of another:
The *jerkin* and the *bases* be a taylor's:
The *scarfe*, I do assure you, is a saylour's:
The *falling band* is likewise none of mine,
Nor *cuffes*; as true as this good light doth shine.

* Anatomy of Melancholy, 8th edit. folio. p. 295.

The *sattin-doublet* and *rays'd velvet hose*
 Are our church-wardens — all the parish knows.
 The boots are John the grocer's; at the Swan:
 The spurs were lent me by a serving-man.
One of my rings, that with the great red stone
 In sooth I borrow'd of my gossip Jone:
 Her husband knows not of it. Gentlemen!
 Thus stands my case; — I pray shew favour then."
 "Why, (quoth the theeves) thou need'st not greatly care,
 Since in thy loss so many beare a share.
 The world goes hard: many good fellowes lacke:
 Looke not, at this time, for a penny backe.
 Go, tell, at London, thou didst meete with foure
 That, rifling *thee*, have rob'd at least a *score*." *

Under the next section of this chapter, including the *Modes of Living*, it is our intention to give a short detail of the *household furniture, eating, drinking, and domestic economy* of our town-ancestors, during the close of the sixteenth, and beginning of the seventeenth century.

In that part of the first volume which is appropriated to the *Modes of Living in the Country*, we have seen Holinshed alluding to the increasing luxury of his age in *furniture*, the convenience, richness, and magnificence of which, as displayed in the upper and middle classes of society in the metropolis, we shall now endeavour briefly to illustrate.

That the palaces of Elizabeth were decorated with all the splendour that tapestry, embroidery, and cloths of gold and silver, and services of plate could effect, we have numberless proofs; but that they united with these the still higher luxuries of comfort and accommodation, too often wanting amid the most gorgeous scenes, we have the testimony of Sir John Harrington, who, in his "Treatise on Playe," circa 1597, thus describes the conveniences which the Queen

* "Doctor Merrie-man: or Nothing but Mirth. Written by S. R. At London, printed for John Deane, and are to be sold at his Shoppe at Temple Barre, under the Gate." 1609. 4to. pp. 24.—Vide *Restituta*, vol. iii. p. 442. Samuel Rowland is supposed to be the author of this lively satire.

had provided for her courtiers :—" It is a great honor of the Queen's court, that no princes servants fare so well and so orderly :— to be short, the stately pallaces, goodly and many chambers, fayr gallerys, large gardens, sweet walkes, that princes with magnificent cost do make, (the xxth parte of which they use not themselves) all shew that they desire, the ease, content and pleasure of theyr followers, as well as themselves. Which matter, though it be more proper to another discourse, yet I colde not but towch it in this, agaynst theyr error rather than awsterytie, that say play becomes not the presence, and that it would not as well become the state of the chamber to have *easye quilted and lyned forms and stools for the lords and ladyes to sit on*, as great plank forms that two yeomen can scant remove out of their places, and waynscot stooles so hard, that since great breeches were layd asyde, men can skant indewr to sitt on." *

Hentzner, in his Travels, gives a still further display of the costly costume of the Queen's apartments. At Windsor Castle he tells us that Her Majesty had " two bathing-rooms cieled and wainscoted with glass ;" and at Hampton Court he adds, " her closet in the chapel was most splendid, quite transparent, having its window of chrystal. We were led into two chambers, called the presence, or chambers of audience, which shone with tapestry of gold and silver, and silk of different colours. — Here is besides a small chapel richly hung with tapestry, where the Queen performs her devotions. In her bed-chamber the bed was covered with very costly cover lids of silk : — in one chamber were several excessively rich tapestries, which are hung up when the queen gives audience to foreign ambassadors ; there were numbers of chusions ornamented with gold and silver ; many counterpanes and coverlids of beds lined with ermine : in short, all the walls of the palace shine with gold and silver. Here is besides a certain cabinet called Paradise, where besides that every thing glitters so with silver, gold, and jewels, as to dazzle ones

* Nugæ Antiquæ, vol. i. pp. 201, 202.

eyes, there is a musical instrument made all of glass, except the strings."*

The emulation of the nobility left them little behind their Queen in ornamental profusion of this kind; and the picture which Shakspeare has drawn of Imogen's chamber in *Cymbeline*, may be quoted as an apposite instance, for he ever imparts the costume of his native island to that of every other country:—

" Her bed-chamber was hanged
With tapestry of silk and silver; the story
Proud Cleopatra, when she met her Roman—

————— A piece of work
So bravely done, so rich, that it did strive
In workmanship, and value.

————— The chimney-piece,
Chaste Dian bathing. —

————— The roof o' the chamber
With golden cherubins is fretted: Her andirons
(I had forgot them) were two winking Cupids
Of silver, each on one foot standing."†

To this sketch we can add a few features from a little work entitled "The Mirrour of Madnes," anno 1576, where the house of the opulent man is thus described:—" My chaumbers, parloures, and other such romes, hanged wyth clothe of tyssue, arrace, and golde; my cupbordes heades set oute and adorned after the richest, costlieste, and most glorious maner, wyth one cuppe cocke height upon an other, beside the greate basen and ewer both of silver and golde; filled at convenient tymes with sweete and pleasaunt waters, wherewith my delicate hands may be washed, my heade recreated, and my nose refreshed, &c."‡

When Lævinus Lemnius, a celebrated physician and divine of Zealand, visited London, during the reign of Elizabeth, he was delighted with the houses and furniture of the middle classes:—" The

* Travels in England, pp. 54. 56—58.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. pp. 489—491.

‡ Censura Literaria, vol. viii. p. 19.

neate cleanliness," says he, "the exquisite finenesse, the pleasaunte and delightfull furniture in every point for household, wonderfully rejoyced mee; their chambers and parlours, strawed over with sweet herbes, refreshed mee; their nosegayes finelye entermingled wyth sondry sortes of fragaunte floures, in their bed chambers and privie roomes, with comfortable smell cheered mee up, and entierlye delighted all my sences." *

To these general descriptions, we shall subjoin some further remarks on a few of the articles which they contain; minutiae which will render us more familiarly acquainted with the domestic arrangements of our forefathers.

Arras or tapestry, representing landscapes and figures, formed the almost universal hangings for rooms below, and chambers above. When first introduced, it was attached to the bare walls; but it was soon found necessary, in consequence of the damp arising from the brick work, to suspend it on wooden frames, placed at such a distance from the sides of the room, as would easily admit of any person being introduced behind it, a facility which soon converted these vacancies into common hiding-places. Thus Shakspeare, during his scenic developements, has very frequent recourse to this expedient. "I will ensconce me behind the arras †;" "I whipt me behind the arras ‡;" "Look thou stand within the arras §;" "Go hide thee behind the arras ||;" "Behind the arras I'll convey myself ¶," &c. &c.

We have seen that in the Country, mottoes were often placed in halls and servants' chambers, for the instruction of the domestics; a custom which was also adopted on tapestry for the improvement of

* "The Touchstone of Complexions, &c." First written in Latine by Levine Lemnie, and now Englished by Thomas Newton. small 8vo. bl. l. 1576.

† Merry Wives of Windsor, act iii. sc. 3.

‡ Much Ado about Nothing, act i. sc. 3.

|| Henry IV. Part I., act ii. sc. 4.

§ King John, act iv. sc. 1.

¶ Hamlet, act iii. sc. 3.

their superiors, and to which Shakspeare refers in his *Rape of Lucrece*,

“ Who fears a sentence, or an old man’s saw,
Shall by a *painted cloth* be kept in awe;” *

and is further confirmed by Dr. Bulleyne, who, in one of his productions, says, — “ This is a comelie parlour, — and *faire clothes*, with pleasaunte borders aboute the same, with many *wise sayings* painted upon them.” †

What these *wise sayings* were, we are taught by the following extract from a publication of 1601: —

“ Read what is written on the *painted cloth* :
Do no man wrong ; be good unto the poor ;
Beware the mouse, the maggot and the moth,
And ever have an eye unto the door ;
Trust not a fool, a villain, nor a whore ;
Go neat, not gay, and spend but as you spare ;
And turn the colt to pasture with the mare ; &c.” ‡

proverbial wisdom, which Orlando, in *As You Like It*, designates by the phrase “ right painted cloth.” §

That “ the arras figures ||,” though in general coarsely executed, had strongly impressed the mind of Shakspeare, and furnished him with no small portion of imagery and allusion, has been very satisfactorily established by Mr. Whiter, who remarks, that their “ effects may be perpetually traced by the observing critic,” even “ when the poet himself is totally unconscious of this predominating influence.” ¶

* Malone’s Supplement, vol. i. p. 487.

† “ A Dialogue both pleasaunt and pitifull, &c.” by Dr. Willyam Bulleyne, 1564. sig. H 5. Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. viii. p. 104.

‡ “ No whipping nor tripping, but a kind of friendly snipping,” 8vo.—Vide Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. viii. p. 104. note by Malone.

§ Act iii. sc. 2.

|| Cymbeline, act ii. sc. 2.

¶ “ A Specimen of a Commentary on Shakspeare, &c.” on the principle of Mr. Locke’s Doctrine of the Association of Ideas, p. 78. 8vo. 1794.

The manner of illuminating the halls and banquetting rooms of the Great at this period, was truly classical. We find that Homer, describing the palace of Alcinous, says —

“ Youths forged of gold, at every table there,
Stood holding flaming torches;” *

and Lucretius, speaking of the Dome of the opulent, describes its walls with

“ A thousand lamps irradiate, propt sublime
By frolic forms of youths in massy gold,
Flinging their splendours o’er the midnight feast.” †

Similar to these were the

“ fixed candlesticks,
With torch-staves in their hands,” ‡

of our ancestors, which generally represented a man in armour with his hands extended, in which were placed the sockets for the lights; and we may easily conceive how splendid these might be rendered by the arts of the goldsmith and jeweller.

Where these antique candelabras were not adopted, *living candle-holders* supplied their place, and were, indeed, always present, when a central or perambulatory light was required: “ Give me a torch,” says Romeo,

“ I’ll be a candle-holder and look on.” §

The gentlemen-pensioners of Queen Elizabeth usually held her torches; and Shakspeare represents Henry the Eighth going to Wolsey’s palace, preceded by sixteen torch-bearers. || At great entertainments, beside candelabras fixed against the sides of the room, torch-

* Pope’s *Odyssey*, book vii.

† Good’s *Lucretius*, vol. i. p. 189.

‡ Reed’s *Shakspeare*, vol. xii. p. 447. King Henry V., act iv. sc. 2.

§ *Romeo and Juliet*, act i. sc. 4.

|| Reed’s *Shakspeare*, vol. xv. p. 55.

bearers stood by the tables, supplying the light which we now receive from chandeliers. *

Watch-lights, which were divided into equal portions by marks, each of which burnt a limited time, were common in the bed-chambers of the wealthy; they are alluded to in Tomkis's *Albumazar*, 1614, where Sulpitia says, "Why should I sit up all night like a *watching-candle*?†

Every *bed-chamber* was furnished with *two* beds, a *standing-bed*, and a *truckle-bed*; in the former slept the master, and in the latter his page. The Host, in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, directing Simple where to find Sir John Falstaff, says, — "There's his chamber, his house, his castle, his *standing-bed*, and *truckle-bed* ‡;" and Decker, and Middleton, further illustrate the custom, when the first, alluding to a page, says, he is "so dear to his lordship, as for the excellency of his fooling to be admitted both to ride in coach with him, and to lie at his very feet on a *truckle-bed* §;" and the second, addressing a similar personage, exclaims, — "Well, go thy ways, for as sweet a breasted page as ever lay at his master's feet in a *truckle-bed*." || It may be added that the *standing-bed* had frequently on it a *counter-point*, or *counterpane*, so rich and costly as, according to Stowe, to be worth sometimes a thousand marks. This piece of luxury forms one of Gremio's articles, when enumerating the furniture of his *city-house*, a catalogue which throws much curious light upon our present subject: —

" My house within the city,
Is richly furnished with plate and gold;
Basons and ewers, to lave her dainty hands;
My hangings all of Tyrian tapestry:

* Vide Warton's Extract from Froissart, *Hist. of English Poetry*, vol. iii. Dissertation, p. lxxvi.

† Ancient British Drama, vol. ii. p. 592.

‡ Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. v. p. 181.

§ Gull's *Horn-book*, pp. 22, 23.

|| "More Dissemblers besides Women," act i. sc. 1.

In *ivory coffer*s I have stuffed my crowns;
 In *cypress chest*s my arras, *counter points*,
 Costly apparel, tents, and canopies,
 Fine linen, *Turky cushions* boss'd with pearl,
Valence of Venice gold in needle-work,
Pewter and brass, and all things that belong
 To house, or housekeeping." *

Pewter, during the reign of Elizabeth, was considered as a very costly material, and, at the commencement of the sixteenth century, had been so rare, as to be hired by the year, even for the use of noblemen's houses. †

The *ivory coffer*s, and *cypress chest*s, mentioned in Gremio's list, were esteemed, at this period, highly ornamental pieces of furniture for apartments designed for the reception of visitors. "I have seen," relates Mr. Steevens, "more than one of these, as old as the time of our poet. They were richly ornamented on the tops and sides with scroll-work, emblematical devices, &c. and were elevated on feet." ‡ Shakspeare has an allusion to this custom in *Twelfth Night*, where he speaks of

"Empty trunks, o'er flourished by the Devil." §

The *tables* in these apartments, and in the halls of the nobility, were so constructed as to *turn up*; being flat leaves, united by hinges, and resting on tressels, so as to fold into a small compass. Thus Capulet, wanting room for the dancers in his hall, calls out

"A hall! a hall! give room, and foot it, girls,
 More light, ye knaves; and *turn the tables up*." ||

When dinner, or supper, was served up, these tables were covered with *carpets*; hence Gremio exclaims, "Where's the cook? Is supper ready? — Be the *carpets* laid?" ¶

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ix. p. 92. *Taming of the Shrew*, act ii. sc. 1.

† Ibid. p. 93. note by Steevens.

‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 376. note. *Twelfth Night*, Act iii. sc. 4.

|| Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xx, p. 65.

¶ Ibid. vol. ix. p. 124.

Pictures constituted a frequent decoration in the rooms of the wealthy; and there are numerous instances to prove that those which were estimated as valuable, were protected by *curtains*. Olivia, addressing Viola in *Twelfth Night*, says,—“We will draw the curtain, and shew you the picture *;” the same imagery occurs in *Troilus and Cressida*, where Pandarus, unveiling Cressida, uses almost the same words: “Come draw this curtain, and let us see your picture †.” The passage, however, which Mr. Douce has quoted in illustration of this subject, as it decides the point, will supersede all further reference:—“In Deloney’s *Pleasant history of Jack of Newbery*, printed before 1597, it is recorded,” he remarks, “that ‘in a faire large parlour which was wainscotted round about, Jacke of Newbery had fiteene faire pictures hanging, *which were covered with curtaines of greene silke*, fringed with gold, which he would often shew to his friends.’ ‡

The practice of *strewing floors with rushes* was general before the introduction of carpets for this purpose, and the first mansions in the kingdom could boast of nothing superior in this respect. Shakspeare has many lines in reference to the custom; Glendower, for instance, interpreting Lady Mortimer’s address to her husband, says,

————— “She bids you
Upon the wanton *rushes* lay you down.” §

Again Iachimo, rising from the Trunk in Imogen’s chamber, exclaims:—

————— “Our Tarquin thus
Did softly press the *rushes*, ere he waken’d
The chastity he wounded;” ||

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 272. Act i. sc. 5.

† Ibid. vol. xv. p. 342. Act iii. sc. 2.

‡ Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 85.

§ Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xi. p. 331. King Henry IV. Part I. act iii. sc. 1.

|| Cymbeline, act ii. sc. 2. Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 466.

and lastly, Romeo calls out

“ A torch for me : let wantons light of heart,
Tickle the senseless rushes with their heels.” *

Similar allusions abound in our old dramatic poets, one of which we shall give for the singularity of its comparison : “ All the ladies and gallants,” says Jonson, in his *Cynthia's Revels*, “ lye languishing upon the rushes, like so many pounded cattle i' the midst of harvest. †”

The utility of the rush, and the species used for this purpose, will be illustrated by the following passages : — “ Rushes that grow upon dry groundes,” observes Dr. Bulleyne, “ be good to strew in halles, chambers, and galleries, to walke upon, defending apparell, as traynes of gownes and kertles from dust ‡ ;” and Decker tells us of “ windowes spread with hearbs, the chimney drest up with greene boughs, and the floore strewed with bulrushes.” §

Of the *hospitality* of the English, and of the style of *eating* and *drinking* in the upper ranks of society, Harrison has given us the following curious, though general, detail.

“ In number of dishes and change of meat,” he remarks, “ the nobilitie of England (whose cookes are for the most part musically headed Frenchmen and strangers) doo most exceed, sith there is no daie in maner that passeth over their heads, wherein they have not onelie béefe, mutton, veale, lambe, kid, porke, conie, capon, pig, or so manie of these as the season yeeldeth : but also some portion of the red or fallow déere, beside great varietie of fish and wild foule, and thereto sundrie other delicacies wherein the sweet hand of the seafaring Portingale is not wanting : so that for a man to dine with one of them,

* Act i. sc. 4. Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 48.

† Act ii. sc. 5.

‡ Bulwarke of Defence, 1579, fol. 21.

§ Belman of London, 1612. sig. B 4.— We may add, also, to this enumeration, the general use of large mirrors, or looking-glasses, for Hentzner tells us that he was shewn, “ at the house of Leonard Smith, a taylor, a most perfect looking-glass, ornamented with gold, pearls, silver, and velvet, so richly as to be estimated at 500 ecus du soleil.” — Travels, p. 32.

and to tast of everie dish that standeth before him (which few use to doo, but ech one feedeth upon that meat him best liketh for the time, the beginning of everie dish notwithstanding being reserved unto the greatest personage that sitteth at the table, to whome it is drawen up still by the waiters as order requireth, and from whence it descendeth againe even to the lower end, whereby each one may tast thereof) is rather to yield unto a conspiracie with a greate deale of meat for the spéedie suppression of naturall health, then the use of a necessarie meane to satisfie himselfe with a competent repast, to susteine his bodie withall. —

“ The chiefe part likewise of their dailie provision is brought in before them (commonlie in silver vessell, if they be of the degree of barons, bishops and upwards) and placed on their tables, whereof when they have taken what it pleaseth them, the rest is reserved, and afterward sent downe to their serving men and waiters, who féed thereon in like sort with convenient moderation, their reversion also being bestowed upon the poore, which lie readie at their gates in great numbers to receive the same. This is spoken of the principall tables whereat the nobleman, his ladie and guesstes are accustomed to sit, beside which they have a certeine ordinarie allowance daillie appointed for their hals, where the chiefe officers and household servants (for all are not permitted by custome to waite upon their master) and with them such inferiour guesstes doo feed as are not of calling to associat the noble man himselfe (so that besides those afore mentioned, which are called to the principall table, there are commonlie fortie or three score persons fed in those hals,) to the great reliefe of such poore sutors and strangers also as oft be partakers thereof and otherwise like to dine hardlie. As for drinke it is usuallie filled in pots, gobblets, jugs, bols of silver in noble mens houses, also in fine Venice glasses of all formes, and for want of these elsewhere in pots of earth of sundrie colours and moulds (whereof manie are garnished with silver) or at the leastwise in pewter, all which notwithstanding are seldome set on the table, but each one as necessitie urgeth, calleth for a cup of such drinke as him listeth to

have: so that when he hath tasted of it he delivered the cup againe to some one of the standers by, who making it cleane by pouring out the drinke that remaineth, restoreth it to the cupbord from whence he fetched the same. By this devise,—much idle tippling is further more cut off, for if the full pots should continuallie stand at the elbow or neere the trencher, diverse would alwaies be dealing with them, whereas now they drinke seldome and onelie when necessitie urgeth, and so avoid the note of great drinking, or often troubling of the servitors with filling of their bols. Neverthelesse in the noble men's hals, this order is not used, neither in anie mans house commonlie under the degree of a knight or esquire of great revenues. It is a world to see in these our daies, wherein gold and silver most aboundeth, how that our gentilitie as lothing those mettals (bicause of the plentie) do now generallie choose rather the Venice glasses both for our wine and béere, than anie of those mettals or stone wherein before time we have béene accustomed to drinke, but such is the nature of man generallie that it most coveteth things difficult to be attained; and such is the estimation of this stuffe, that manie become rich onelie with their new trade unto Murana (a towne neere to Venice situat on the Adriatike sea) from whence the verie best are dailie to be had, and such as for beautie doo well neare match the christall or the ancient Murrhina vasa, whereof now no man hath knowledge. And as this is seene in the gentilitie, so in the wealthie communaltie the like desire of glasse is not neglected.”*

To this interesting sketch a few particulars shall be added in order to render the picture more complete; and, in the first place, we shall give an account, from an eye-witness, of the ceremonies accompanying the dinner-table of Elizabeth. “While the Queen was still at prayers,” relates Hentzner, “we saw her table set out with the following solemnity:

“A gentleman entered the room bearing a rod, and along with

* Holinshed, vol. i. p. 280.

him another who had a table-cloth, which, after they had both kneeled three times with the utmost veneration, he spread upon the table, and after kneeling again, they both retired. Then came two others, one with the rod again, the other with a salt-seller, a plate and bread; when they had kneeled, as the others had done, and placed what was brought upon the table, they too retired with the same ceremonies performed by the first. At last came an unmarried lady (we were told she was a countess) and along with her a married one, bearing a tasting knife; the former was dressed in white silk, who, when she had prostrated herself three times in the most graceful manner, approached the table, and rubbed the plates with bread and salt, with as much awe, as if the queen had been present: when they had waited there a little while, the yeoman of the guards entered, bare-headed, clothed in scarlet, with a golden rose upon their backs, bringing in at each turn a course of twenty-four dishes, served in plate, most of it gilt; these dishes were received by a gentleman in the same order they were brought, and placed upon the table, while the lady-taster gave to each of the guard a mouthful to eat, of the particular dish he had brought for fear of any poison. During the time that this guard, which consists of the tallest and stoutest men that can be found in all England, being carefully selected for this service, were bringing dinner, twelve trumpets and two kettle-drums made the hall ring for half an hour together. At the end of all this ceremonial a number of unmarried ladies appeared, who, with particular solemnity, lifted the meat off the table, and conveyed it into the queen's inner and more private chamber, where, after she had chosen for herself, the rest goes to the ladies of the court. The queen dines and sups alone with very few attendants."*

The strict regularity and temperance which prevailed in the court of Elizabeth, were by no means characteristic of that of her successor, who, in his convivial moments, too often grossly transgressed

* Hentzner's Travels, pp. 36, 37.

the bounds of sobriety. When Christian IV., King of Denmark, visited England in July, 1606, the carousals at the palace were carried to a most extravagant height, and their influence on the higher ranks was such, that "our good English nobles," remarks Harrington, "whom I never could get to taste good liquor, now follow the fashion, and wallow in beastly delights. The ladies abandon their sobriety, and are seen to roll about in intoxication;" accusations which he fully substantiates whilst relating the following most ludicrous scene:—

"One day," says he, "a great feast was held, and, after dinner, the representation of Solomon his Temple, and the coming of the Queen of Sheba was made, or (as I may better say) was meant to have been made, before their Majesties, by device of the Earl of Salisbury and others. — But, alas! as all earthly thinges do fail to poor mortals in enjoyment, so did prove our presentment hereof. The Lady who did play the Queen's part, did carry most precious gifts to both their Majesties; but, forgetting the steppes arising to the canopy, overset her caskets into his Danish Majesties lap, and fell at his feet, tho I rather think it was in his face. Much was the hurry and confusion; cloths and napkins were at hand, to make all clean. His Majesty then got up and would dance with the Queen of Sheba; but he fell down and humbled himself before her, and was carried to an inner chamber and laid on a bed of state; which was not a little defiled with the presents of the Queen which had been bestowed on his garments; such as wine, cream, jelly, beverage, cakes, spices, and other good matters. The entertainment and show went forward, and most of the presenters went backward, or fell down; wine did so occupy their upper chambers. Now did appear, in rich dress, Hope, Faith, and Charity: Hope did assay to speak, but wine rendered her endeavours so feeble that she withdrew, and hoped the King would excuse her brevity: Faith was then all alone, for I am certain she was not joyned with good works, and left the court in a staggering condition: Charity came to the King's feet, and seemed to cover the multitude of sins her sisters had committed;

in some sorte she made obeysance and brought giftes, but said she would return home again, as there was no gift which heaven had not already given his Majesty. She then returned to Hope and Faith, who were both sick and spewing in the lower hall. Next came Victory, in bright armour, and presented a rich sword to the King, who did not accept it, but put it by with his hand; and by a strange medley of versification, did endeavour to make suit to the King. But Victory did not triumph long; for, after much lamentable utterance, she was led away like a silly captive, and laid to sleep in the outer steps of the anti-chamber. Now did Peace make entry, and strive to get foremoste to the King; but I grieve to tell how great wrath she did discover unto those of her attendants; and much contrary to her semblance, most rudely made war with her olive branch, and laid on the pates of those who did oppose her coming." The facetious Knight concludes his story by declaring that "in our Queen's days — I neer did see such lack of good order, discretion, and sobriety, as I have now done." *

We have already mentioned in Part the First, Chapter the Fifth of this work, that the usual hour of dinner, among the upper classes, was eleven o'clock in the forenoon; and though Harrison, in the passage which we last quoted from him, describes the provisions as often brought to the tables of the nobility served on silver, yet *wooden trenchers* for plates were still frequently to be found at the most sumptuous tables; thus Harrington in 1592, giving directions to his servants, orders, "that no man waite at the table without a *trencher* in his hand, except it be upon good cause, on pain of 1d." †

To the silver, gilt plate, and cut glass of Harrison, may be added the use of *china*, an article of luxury to which the Clown in *Measure for Measure* thus alludes: — "Your honours have seen such dishes; they are not *china dishes*, but very good dishes." ‡ A considerable quantity of *china* or *porcelain*, had been brought into this country,

* *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. pp. 349—352.

† *Ibid.* p. 106.

‡ Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. vi. p. 236. Act ii. sc. 1.

during the reign of Elizabeth, as part of the cargo of some captured Spanish carracks.* It appears, also, that carpet-cloth for tables was, towards the close of our period, dismissed for table-linen, and that of a quality so fine, that Mrs. Otter, in Ben Jonson's *Silent Woman*, which was first acted in 1609, laments having "stained a damask table-cloth, cost me eighteen pound."†

With all these luxuries, the reader will be surprised to learn, that *forks* were not introduced into this country before 1611. Knives had been in general use since the year 1563, but for the former the fingers had been the sole substitute. The honour of this cleanly fashion, must be given to that singular traveller Thomas Coryat, who in his *Crudities* informs us, that he found *forks* common in Italy. "Hereupon," says he, "I myself thought good to imitate the Italian fashion, by this *forked* cutting of meate, not only while I was in Italy, but also in Germany, and oftentimes in *England* since I came home; being once quipped for that frequent using of my *forke*, by a certaine learned gentleman, a familiar friend of mine, one M. Laurence Whitaker, who in his merry humour doubted not to call me at table *Furcifer*, only for using a *forke* at feeding, but for no other cause."‡

The utility of the practice was soon acknowledged, for we find Jonson, in 1614, speaking of their adoption in his "Devil Is An Ass," where Meercraft, having mentioned his "project of the forks," Sledge exclaims —

" Forks? what be they ?

Meer. The laudable use of *forks*,
Brought into custom here, as they are in Italy,
To th' sparing o' napkins." §

To the articles of provision enumerated by Harrison, we may add,

* Douce's Illustrations, vol. i. p. 125.

† Whalley's Jonson; act iii. sc. 2.

‡ "Coryat's Crudities, hastily gobbled up in five Moneths Travells, &c." 1611. 4to. p. 90.

§ Whalley's Johnson; act v. sc. 4.

that the bread of this period was of many various kinds, and sometimes peculiarly fine, especially that made at York. "Bred," says a physician who wrote in 1572, "of dyvers graines, of divers formes, in divers places be used:—some in forme of manchet, used of the gentility: some of greate loves, as is usual among yeomanry, some betweene both, as with the franklings: some in forme of cakes, as at weddings: some rondes of hogs, as at upsittings: some simnels, cracknels, and buns, as in the Lent, some in brode cakes, as the oten cakes in Kendall on yrons: some on slate stones as in the hye peke: some in frying pans as in Darbyshyre: some betwene yrons as wapons: some in round cakes as bysket for the ships. But these and all other the mayne bread of York excelleth, for that it is of the finest floure of the wheat well tempered, best baked, a patterne of all others the finest." *

Dinners had attained a degree of epicurism which rival those of the present day; three courses, of which the second consisted of game, and the third of pastry, creams, and confections, together with a dessert, including marchpane, (a cake composed of filberts, almonds, pistacho-nuts, pine-kernels, sugar of roses, and flour) marmalades, pomegranates, oranges, citrons, apples, pears, raisins, dates, nuts, grapes, &c. &c. †, were common in the houses of the opulent, nor was any expense spared in procuring the most luxurious dainties. "Who will not admire," remarks an Essayist of this age, "our nice dames of London, who must have cherries at twenty shillings a pound, and pescods at five shillings a pecke, huske without pease? Yong rabbettes of a spanne, and chickens of an inch?" ‡

To such a height, indeed, had sensuality in eating arisen among the courtiers of James the First, that Osborne, in his "Traditional

* "The benefit of the auncient Bathes of Buckstones, which cureth most greivous sicknesses, never before published: compiled by John Jones, Phisition. At the King's Medenagh Darby. Anno salutis 1572, &c." bl. l. — Vide *Censura Literaria*, vol. x. p. 277.

† Vide Stubbes's *Anatomie of Abuses*, p. 69, and Caius's *Booke of Counseil*, &c. fol. 24.

‡ The *Passions of the Minde*. By Th. W. (Thomas Wright.) London, printed by V. S. for W. B. 1601. small 8vo.

Memorials" on the reign of that monarch, informs us, "the *Earl of Carlisle* was one of the *Quorum*, that brought in the vanity of *Ante-suppers* not heard of in our Fore-fathers time, and for ought I have read, or at least remember, unpractised by the most luxurious tyrants. The manner of which was, to have a board covered at the first entrance of the guests with dishes as high as a tall man could well reach, filled with the choicest and dearest viands sea and land could afford: and all this once seen and having feasted the eyes of the invited, was in a manner thrown away, and fresh set on the same height, having only this advantage of the other, that it was hot. I cannot forget one of the attendants of the K. that at a feast, made by this monster in excess, eat to his single share a whole pie reckoned to my Lord at ten pounds." *

The extravagance and excess of refection with regard to eatables, must, however, we are sorry to say, yield to those which accompanied the use, or rather the abuse, of vinous liquors. The propensity of the English of his times to drunkenness, has been frequently commented on by Shakspeare; Iago, in reference to a drinking-catch which he had just sung, says, "I learned it in England, where (indeed) they are most potent in potting; your Dane, your German, and your swag-bellied Hollander, — Drink, ho! — are nothing to your English.

Cass. Is your Englishman so expert in his drinking?

Iago. Why, he drinks you, with facility, your Dane dead drunk; he sweats not to overthrow your Almain; he gives your Hollander a vomit, ere the next pottle can be filled †;" a charge which seems to be confirmed by the sober testimony of Gascoigne, — "The Almaynes," he observes, "with their smale Rhenish wine, are contented; but we must have March beere, double beere, dagger ale, bracket, &c. Yea, wine itself is not sufficient, but sugar, lemons,

* The Works of Francis Osborn, Esq. 8vo. 9th edit. p. 475.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xix. p. 335.

and spices, must be drowned thereinne!" * Yet, it is but fair to subjoin, as an acknowledged fact, that we derived this *vinosity*, as Heywood terms it, from the Danes; "they," says he, "have made a profession thereof from antiquity, and are the first upon record that brought their wassel-bowles and elbowe-deep healthes into this land." †

Of the *consumption* of wine, a striking estimate may be formed, from part of a letter addressed by the Earl of Shrewsbury to the Marquis of Winchester and Sir Walter Mildmay, dated January, 1569:—"It may please you to understaund," says His Lordship, "that whereas I have had a certen ordinary allowaunce of wine, amongs other noble men, for expenses in my howsehold, w'out imposte; The charg's daily that I do nowe susteyn, and have done all this yere past, well knownen by reason of the Quene of Scotts, are so grete therein as I am compelled to be now a suter unto yow that ye woll please to have a friendlie considerac'on unto the necessitie of my large expenses. *Truly two tonnes in a monthe have not hitherto sufficed ordinarily.*" "This passage," observes Mr. Lodge, "will serve to correct a vulgar error, relating to the consumption of wine in those days, which, instead of being less, appears to have been, at least in the houses of the great, even more considerable than that of the present time. The good people who tell us that Queen Elizabeth's Maids of Honour breakfasted on roast beef, generally add, that wine was then used in England as a medicine, for that it was sold only by the *apothecaries*. The latter assertion, though founded on a fact, seems to have led to a mistake in the former; for the word Apothecary, from the Greek *Αποθήκη*, *repositorium*, is applicable to any shopkeeper, or warehouseman, and was probably once used in that general sense." ‡ It appears, however, from Decker's Tracts, that apothecaries, in the *modern acceptation of the*

* *Delicate Dyet for Daintie-mouthed Droonkards*: wherein the fowle abuse of common carousing and quaffing with heartie draughtes is honestly admonished. 8vo. 1576.

† *Philocothonista*, or the drunkard opened, dissected, and anatomized, 4to.

‡ Lodge's Illustrations of British History, &c., vol. ii. p. 27.

word, sold both wine and tobacco, and that their shops formed the fashionable lounge of the day: — “here you must observe to know in what state tobacco is in town, better than the merchants; and to discourse of the apothecaries where it is to be sold; and to be able to speak of their wines, *as readily as the apothecary himself reading the barbarous hand of a doctor.*” * “Some lie in ambush, to note what apothecary’s shop he (the gallant) resorts to *every morning.*” †

The *variety* of wines in the days of Shakspeare has not since been exceeded, or, perhaps, even equalled. Harrison mentions fifty-six French wines, and thirty-six Spanish, Italian, &c., to which must be added several *home-made* wines, such as Ypocras, Clarey, Braket, &c. &c., for which receipts may be found in Arnold’s Chronicle.

Among the *foreign* wines used at this period, none have attracted so much notice, or so much controversy, as the celebrated beverage of Falstaff, *Sack*. Whether this was a *dry* or a *sweet* wine has been left undecided by the commentators, after much elaborate and contradictory disquisition. If we may repose, however, on the authority of Gervase Markham’s “English Housewife,” a book *published* very shortly after the death of Shakspeare, and probably *written* several years before that event, a book professing to contain “the opinions of the greatest Physicians,” many years antecedent to the Dedication which includes this assertion ‡, the question must be considered as finally settled. This author, in his fourth chapter, entitled, “The ordering, preserving, and helping of all sorts of Wines, and first of the choice of sweet Wines,” opens the subject by declaring, that he had derived his knowledge on wines from a vintner “profest skilful in

* Gull’s Horn-book, 1609, reprint, p. 119, 120.

† English Villanies, &c. first printed in 1616.

‡ Of the precise year when the first edition of Markham’s *English House-wife* was published, I am ignorant; but a near approximation to the fact may be deduced from the following statement: —The *first* edition of his *Country Contentments* appeared in 1615, and the *eleventh* in 1683; of his *Cheap and Good Husbandry*, the *first* impression took place in 1616, and the *fourteenth* in 1683; and of the *English House-wife*, the *ninth* edition issued from the press in the same year, namely 1683.

the trade," and he then immediately proceeds, addressing the housewife, "to speak first of the election of *sweet* wines; "she must," says he, "be carefull that the Malmseys be full wines, pleasant, well hewed and fine: that Bastard be fat, and strong, if it be tawney it skills not: for the tawny Bastards be always the sweetest. Muscadine must be great, pleasant and strong with a sweet scent, and with Amber colour. *Sack* if it be *Seres* (*as it should be*) you shall know it by the mark of a cork burned on one side of the bung, and they be ever full gage, and so are *other Sacks*, and the longer they lye, the better they be." *

From this passage we learn three circumstances relative to *Sack*: 1stly, that *Sack* was a *sweet* wine; 2dly, that *Seres*, or *Xeres*, *Sack*, or what Shakspeare, in 1597, calls "*a good sherris-sack*," a wine manufactured at Xeres in Spain, was the most esteemed of its kind; and, 3dly, that *other Sacks* were in use in this country. Still further light is thrown upon this topic in a subsequent page, where we are told, when enumerating the *sweet* wines in contradistinction to those of a sharp taste, that *Sacks* are of *three* species — "*Your best Sacks* are of *Seres* in Spain, your *smaller* of Galicia and Portugall, your *strong Sacks* are of the Islands of the Canaries, and of Malligo." † It is, therefore, to be inferred, that, though all these *Sacks* were *sweet*, the *sweetest*, as well as the strongest, were the *Canary* and *Malaga*; next to these in *saccharine* impregnation, and best in *flavour*, the *Xeres*; and lastly, the *weakest* and *least sweet*, were the *Galicia* and *Portugal*.

The conclusion we consequently draw from these premises is, that the *Sherris-Sack* of Falstaff was Spanish *Xeres*, a wine not dry, like our modern Sherry, but *sweet*, and though not so strong or so sweet as the *Sacks* brought from *Canary* and *Malaga*, superior in *flavour* to both.

It may be objected to this deduction, that if *Sherris-Sack* were a sweet wine, it would not have been necessary to add sugar to it, an article which Sir John ever mingled with his favourite potation. ‡

* English Housewife, p. 112, 113. † Ibid. p. 118.

‡ "If sack and sugar be a fault, god help the wicked." — Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 308.

This will not prove valid, however, when we recollect that, in the first place, Xeres was not the *sweetest* of the Sacks, and, in the second, that in Shakspeare's time it was the custom to mix sugar with every species of wine; "gentlemen garrawse," observes Fynes Moryson, "only in wine, with which they mix sugar, which I never observed in any other place or kingdom to be used for that purpose. And because the taste of the English is thus delighted with sweetness, the wines in taverns (for I speak not of merchant's or gentlemen's cellars) are commonly mixed at the filling thereof, to make them pleasant." * A similar partiality for sugar in wine is noticed by Paul Hentzner †, as one of the peculiarities of the English; and from these passages Mr. Reed deduces the legitimate inference that the fondness of the English nation for sugar, at this epoch, was so great as to induce them to mix it even with sweet wines; "if," says he, "the English drank only rough wine with *sugar*, there appears nothing extraordinary, or worthy of particular notice.—The addition of *sugar*, even to *sack*, might, *perhaps*, to a taste habituated to sweets, operate only in a manner to improve the flavour of the wine." ‡

We find also from Sir John's comments on his favourite liquor, that he added not only *sugar*, but a *toast* to it §; that he had an insuperable aversion to its being mulled with eggs, vehemently exclaiming, "I'll no pullet-sperm in my brewage||;" and that he abominated its sophistication with lime, declaring that "a coward is worse than a cup of sack with lime in it ¶;" an ingredient which the vintners used to increase its strength and durability.

* Itinerary, 1617, Part III. p. 152.

† Travels, Jeffery's edition, p. 64.: "They put a great deal of sugar in their drink."

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 282.

§ "Go fetch me a quart of sack, *put a toast in it*," Merry Wives of Windsor, act iii. sc. 5.

|| Reed's Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 150.

¶ Ibid. vol. xi. p. 281, 282.—It appears that Sack, in Shakspeare's time, was sold at eight-pence halfpenny a Quart—for in Falstaff's Tavern-bill occurs the following *item*: "Sack, two gallons, 5s. 8d." Vol. xi. p. 314.

To this deterioration, our witty Knight, as his convivial hours were usually spent in *taverns*, was, of course, peculiarly subject. Houses of this description were very numerous in our author's days, and, there is reason to think, fully as much frequented as are similar places in the present age. The *Boars Head Tavern* in Eastcheap, and the *Mermaid* in Cornhill, immortalised in the writings of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Fletcher, are enumerated in a *long list* of taverns given us in an old black-letter quarto, entitled *Newes from Bartholomew Fayre* *; and to these we must add, as of equal poetical celebrity, the *Tabard Inn* or Tavern, noticed by Stowe, in 1598, as the most ancient in Southwark †, and endeared to us as the "Hosterie" of the never-to-be-forgotten pilgrims, in that delightful work, the *Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer.

A tavern, says a writer, who lived in these times, and who published in 1628, "is the common consumption of the afternoon, and the murderer or maker-away of a rainy day. — To give you the total reckoning of it; it is the busy man's recreation, the idle man's business, the melancholy man's sanctuary, the stranger's welcome, the inns-of-court man's entertainment, the scholar's kindness, and the citizen's

* The title-page of this curious poem is lost, but the passage alluded to, is as follows:—

"There hath beene great sale and utterance of wine,
 Besides beere and ale, and ipocras fine,
 In every country, region, and nation;
 Chiefely at Billingsgate, at the *Salutation*,
 And *Bores Head*, neere London Stone,
The Swan at Dowgate, a taverne well knowne,
The Miter in Cheape, and then the *Bull Head*,
 And many like places that make noses red;
The Bores Head in old Fish-street, *three Cranes* in the Vintree,
 And now of late St. Martin's in the Sentree;
The Wind-mill in Lothburry, *the Ship* at the Exchange,
King's Head in New Fish-streete, where roysters do range;
The Mermaid in Cornhill, *Red Lion* in the Strand,
Three Tuns Newgate Market, Old Fish-street at *the Swan*."

† "The Survey of London," 4to. 1618. bl. l. p. 782.

curtesy. It is the study of sparkling wits, and a cup of canary their book." *

At these places were regular *ordinaries*, which Decker tells us were of three kinds; namely, "an *ordinary of the largest reckoning*, whither most of your courtly gallants do resort;" a *twelve-penny ordinary* frequented by "the justice of peace or young knight;" and a *three-penny ordinary*, "to which your London usurer, your stale batchelor, and your thrifty attorney do resort." †

From the same author we also learn, that it was usual in taverns, especially in the city, to send presents of wine from one room to another, as a complimentary mark of friendship:—"Enquire," directs he, "what gallants sup in the next room; and, if they be any of your acquaintance, do not you, after the city fashion, send them in a pottle of wine and your name." ‡ This custom, too, is recorded by Shakespeare, as a mode of introduction to a stranger, where Bardolph, at the Garter Inn, Windsor, addressing Falstaff, says,—“Sir John, there's one master Brook below would fain speak with you, and be acquainted with you; and hath sent your worship a morning's draught of sack §;” a passage which Mr. Malone has illustrated by the following nearly contemporary anecdote:—"Ben Jonson," he relates, "was at a tavern, and in comes Bishop Corbet, (but not so then,) into the next room. Ben Jonson calls for a quart of raw wine, and gives it to the tapster. 'Sirrah,' says he, 'carry this to the gentleman in the next chamber, and tell him, I sacrifice my service to him.' The fellow did, and in those words. 'Friend,' says Dr. Corbet, 'I thank him for his love; but 'pr'ythee tell him from me that he is mistaken; for sacrifices are always burnt.'" ||

The most singular and offensive practice, however, at least to

* Earle's *Microcosmography*, reprint by Bliss, pp. 39, 40.

† Gull's Horn-book, reprint by Nott, pp. 109, 127, 128.

‡ Ibid. p. 159, 160.

§ Reed's *Shakespeare*, vol. v. p. 91.

|| Ibid. vol. v. p. 91. note. From *Merry Passages and Jeasts*, MSS. Harl. 6395.

modern manners, which occurred at this period in taverns, a practice common, too, even among the higher ranks, is likewise related by Decker, when giving advice "How a Gallant should behave himself in an Ordinary" of the first class:—"You may rise in dinner time," he tells his "courtly gallant," "to ask for a *closestool*, protesting to all the gentlemen that it costs you an hundred pounds a year in physick, besides the annual pension which your wife allows her doctor; and, if you please, you may, as your great French lord doth, *invite some special friend of yours from the table to hold discourse with you as you sit in that withdrawing chamber*; from whence being returned again to the board, you shall sharpen the wits of all the eating gallants about you, and do them great pleasure to ask what pamphlets or poems a man might think fittest to wipe his tail with."* Gross as this habit now appears to us, it was prevalent upon the continent until nearly the close of the last century.

To the reign of Elizabeth is to be attributed the introduction of a luxury, which has since become almost universal, the custom of using, or, as it was then called, of *taking tobacco*. This herb, which was first brought into England by Sir Francis Drake, about the year 1586, met with an early and violent opposition, and gave birth to a multitude of invectives and satires, among which the most celebrated is King James's "Counterblast to Tobacco." This monarch entertained the most rooted antipathy to the use of tobacco in any form, and closes his treatise by asserting that it is "a custom loathsome to the eye, hatefull to the nose, harmfull to the braine, dangerous to the lungs, and in the blacke stinking fume thereof, nearest resembling the horrible Stigian smoake of the pit that is bottomless."† He also

* Gull's Horn-book, pp. 121, 122.—"Let us here remark," adds Dr. Nott, in a note on this passage, "that J. Harington is to be considered as the inventor of that cleanly comfort the water-closet; which gave rise to his witty little tract above-mentioned, (*Metamorphosis of Ajax*, a jakes, 1596,) wherein he humorously recommends the same to Q. Elizabeth; and for which, by the way, he was banished her court."

† The Workes of the most High and Mighty Prince, James, &c. &c. folio, 1616. p. 222.

tells us in another work, that were he to invite the devil to a dinner, "he should have these three dishes — 1. a pig; 2. a poole of ling and mustard; and 3. a pipe of tobacco for digesture." *

Tobacco may be said, indeed, to have made many inroads in domestic cleanliness, and, on this account, to have deservedly incurred the dislike of that large portion of the female sex on whom the charge of household economy devolved. "Surely," says James, "smoke becomes a kitchen farre better than a dining chamber," a remark which is as applicable now as it was then; but we cannot help smiling when he adds, with his usual credulity, "and yet it makes a kitchen also oftentimes in the inward parts of men, soyling and infecting them, with an unctuous and oily kind of soote, as hath bene found in some great Tobacco takers, that after their death were opened." †

Such were, indeed, the tales in common circulation among the lower orders, and which Ben Jonson has very humorously put into the mouth of *Cob* in *Every Man in his Humour*: — "By Gods me," says the water-bearer, "I marle what pleasure or felicity they have in taking this roguish tobacco! It's good for nothing but to choak a man, and fill him full of smoke and embers: there were four died out of one house last week with taking of it, and two more the bell went for yesternight; one of them, they say, will ne'er scape it; he voided a bushel of soot yesterday, upward and downward. By the stocks, an' there were no wiser men than I, I'd have it present whipping, man or woman, that should but deal with a tobacco-pipe; why, it will stifle them all in the end, as many as use it; it's little better than ratsbane or rosaker." ‡

It would appear that the prejudices against the use of this narcotic required much time for their extirpation; for Burton, who wrote about thirty years after its introduction, and at the very close of the

* Apophthegms of King James, 1671.

† The Workes of King James, folio, p. 221.

‡ Whalley's Jonson; act iii. sc. 5.

Shakspearean era, seems as violent against the common use of tobacco as even James himself:—"A good vomit," says he, "I confesse, a vertuous herbe, if it be well qualified, opportunely taken, and medicinally used, but as it is commonly used by most men, which take it as Tinkers do ale, 'tis a plague, a mischief, a violent purger of goods, lands, health, hellish, devilish damn'd tobacco, the ruine and overthrow of body and soule."*

Notwithstanding this abuse, however, and the edicts of King James forbidding its consumption in all ale-houses, tobacco soon acquired such general favour, that Stowe tells us in his *Annals*, "it was commonly used by *most* men and *many* women;" and James, appealing to his subjects, exclaims,—"Now how you are by this custome disabled in your goods, let the gentry of this land beare witnesse, some of them bestowing three, some foure hundred pounds a yeere upon this precious stinke†;" a sum so enormous, that we must conclude them to have been as determined smokers as the Buckinghamshire parson recorded by Lilly, who "was so given over to tobacco and drink, that when he had *no* tobacco, he would cut the *bell-ropes* and *smoke* them!"‡

Snuff-taking was as much in fashion as smoking; and the following passage from Decker proves, that the *gallants* of his day were as extravagant and ridiculous in their use of it as our modern *beaux*, whether we regard the splendour of their boxes, or their affectation in applying the contents; it appears also to have been customary to take snuff immediately before dinner. "Before the meat come smoking to the board, our gallant must draw out his tobacco-box, 'and' the ladle for the cold snuff into the nostril,—all which artillery may be of gold or silver, if he can reach to the price of it;—then let him shew his several tricks in taking it, as the whiff, the ring, &c. for these are complements that gain gentlemen no mean respect."§ "It

* *Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 235. col. 1.

† *History of his Life and Times*, 8vo. p. 44.

‡ *Workes of King James*, p. 221.

§ *Gull's Horn-book*, pp. 119, 120.

is singular," remarks Dr. Nott, alluding to the general use of tobacco at this period, "when the introduction of this new indulgence had so engaged the pen of almost every cotemporary playwright and pamphleteer, nay, even of royalty itself, that Shakspeare should have been totally silent upon it." *

The residue of the *Domestic Economy* of this era may be included under the articles of *servants* and *miscellaneous household arrangements*.

In the days of Elizabeth servants were more numerous, and considered as a more essential mark of gentility, than at any subsequent period. "The English," observes Hentzner, "are lovers of shew, liking to be followed wherever they go by whole troops of servants, who wear their master's arms in silver, fastened to their left arms." † They were, also, usually distinguished by *blue coats*; thus Grumio, enquiring for his master's servants, says,—“Call forth Nathaniel, Joseph, Nicholas, Philip, Walter, Sugarsop, and the rest; let their heads be sleekly combed, their *blue coats* brushed.” ‡ We learn, however, from Fynes Moryson, that both silver badges and blue coats went out of fashion in the reign of James the First; “the servants of gentlemen,” he informs us, “were wont to weare *blew coates*, with their master's badge of silver on the left sleeve, but now they most commonly weare *clokes garded with lace*, all the servants of one family wearing the same livery for colour and ornament.” §

The very strict regulations to which servants were subjected in the sixteenth century, and the admirable order preserved in the household of the upper classes at that time, will be illustrated in a very satisfactory and entertaining manner, by the “Orders for Household Servantes; first devised by John Haryngton, in the yeare 1566, and renewed by John Haryngton, Sonne of the saide John, in

* Reprint of Decker's Gull's Horn-book, p. 17. note 15.

† Travels, 8vo. p. 63.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ix. p. 127.

§ Itinerary, 1617. folio.

the yeare 1592: the saide John, the Sonne, being then High Shrieve of the County of Somerset."

"Imprimis, That no servant bee absent from praier, at morning or evening, without a lawfull excuse, to be alledged within one day after, upon payne to forfeit for every tyme 2d.

2. "*Item*, That none sweare any othe, uppon paine for every othe 1d.

3. "*Item*, That no man leave any doore open, that he findeth shut, without there bee cause, upon payne for every tyme 1d.

4. "*Item*, That none of the men be in bed, from our Lady-day to Michaelmas, after 6 of the clock in the morning: nor out of his bed after 10 of the clock at night; nor, from Michaelmas till our Lady-day, in bed after 7 in the morning; nor out after 9 at night, without reasonable cause, on paine of 2d.

5. "*Item*, That no man's bed be unmade, nor fire or candle-box uncleane, after 8 of the clock in the morning, on paine of 1d.

6. "*Item*, That no man make water within either of the courts, upon paine of, every tyme it shalbe proved, 1d.

7. "*Item*, That no man teach any of the children any dishonest speeche, or bawdie word, or othe, on paine of 4d.

8. "*Item*, "That no man waite at the table, without a trencher in his hand, except it be uppon some good cause, on paine of 1d.

9. "*Item*, That no man appointed to waite at my table, be absent that meale, without reasonable cause, on paine of 1d.

10. "*Item*, If any man breake a glasse, hee shall answer the price thereof out of his wages; and, if it bee not known who breake it, the buttler shall pay for it, on paine of 12d.

11. "*Item*, The table must bee covered halfe an hour before 11 at dinner, and 6 at supper, or before, on paine of 2d.

12. "*Item*, That meate bee readie at 11, or before, at dinner; and 6, or before, at supper, on paine of 6d.

13. "*Item*, That none be absent, without leave or good cause, the whole day, or any part of it, on paine of 4d.

14. “ *Item*, That no man strike his fellow, on paine of losse of service ; nor revile or threaten, or provoke another to strike, on paine of 12d.

15. “ *Item*, That no man come to the kitchen without reasonable cause, on paine of 1d. and the cook likewyse to forfeit 1d.

16. “ *Item*, That none toy with the maids, on paine of 4d.

17. “ *Item*, That no man weare foule shirt on Sunday, nor broken hose or shooes, or dublett without buttons, on paine of 1d.

18. “ *Item*, That when any strainger goeth hence, the chamber be drest up againe within 4 hours after, on paine of 1d.

19. “ *Item*, That the hall bee made cleane every day, by eight in the winter, and seaven in the sommer, on paine of him that should do it to forfeit 1d.

20. “ That the court-gate bee shutt each meale, and not opened during dinner and supper, without just cause, on paine the porter to forfeit for every time 1d.

21. “ *Item*, That all stayrs in the house, and other rooms that neede shall require, bee made cleane on Fryday after dinner, on paine of forfeiture of every on whome it shall belong unto, 3d.

“ All which sommes shalbe duly paide each quarter-day out of their wages, and bestowed on the poore, or other godly use.” *

To the tribe of household servants, must be added, as a constant inmate in the houses of the great, during the life of Shakspeare, and, indeed, to the close of the reign of Charles I., that motley personage, the *Domestic Fool*, who was an essential part of the entertainment of the fire-side, not only in the palace and the castle, but in the tavern and the brothel.

The character of the “all-licens’d fool” has been copied from the life, with his usual naïveté and precision, and with an inexhaustible fund of wit, in many of the plays of our poet ; yet, perhaps, we shall no where find a more condensed and faithful picture of the

* *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. pp. 105—108.

manners of this once indispensable source of domestic pleasantry, than what has been given us by Dr. Lodge:—"This fellow," says he, "in person is comely, in *apparell* courtly, but in behaviour a very ape, and no man; his studie is to coine *bitter jeasts*, or to shew antique motions, or *to sing baudie sonnets and ballads*: give him a little wine in his head, he is continually flearing and making of mouthes: he laughs intemperately at every little occasion, and dances about the house, leaps over tables, out-skips mens heads, trips up his companion's heeles, burns sack with a candle, and hath all the feats of a lord of misrule in the countrie: feed him in his humor, you shall have his heart, in meere kindnesse he will hug you in his armes, kisse you on the cheeke, and rapping out an horrible oth, crie God's soule Tum I love you, you know my poore heart, come to my chamber for a pipe of tabacco, there lives not a man in this world that I more honour. In these ceremonies you shall know his courting, and it is a speciall mark of him at the table, he sits and makes faces." *

On the passages in this quotation distinguished by Italics, it will be necessary to offer a brief comment. From Shakspeare we learn that the *apparel* of the domestic fool was of two kinds; he had either a parti-coloured coat fastened round the body by a girdle, with close breeches, and hose on each leg of different colours; or he wore a long petticoat dyed with curious tints, and fringed with yellow. With both dresses was generally connected a hood, covering the whole head, falling over part of the breast and shoulders, and surmounted with asses ears, or a cocks-comb. Bells and a bauble were the usual insignia of the character; the former either attached to the elbows,

* Wit's Miserie and the World's Madnesse, 4to. 1599. — So necessary was a fool to the monarch and his courtiers, that Armin, in his *Nest of Ninnies*, 4to. 1608, describing Will Sommers, Henry the Eighth's fool, says,—

"In all the Court
Few men were more belov'd than was this Foole,
Whose merry prate kept with the king much rule.
When he was sad, the King and he would rime:
Thus *Will* exiled sadnesse many a time."

or the skirt of the coat, and the latter, consisting of a stick, decorated at one end with a carved fool's head, and having at the other an inflated bladder, an instrument either of sport or defence.

Bitter jests, provided they were so dressed up, or so connected with adjunctive circumstances, as to raise a laugh, were at all times allowed; but it was moreover expected, that their keenness or bitterness should be also allayed by a due degree of obliquity in the mode of attack, by a careless, and, apparently, undesigning manner of delivery, and by a playful and frolic demeanour. For these purposes, fragments of *sonnets and ballads* were usually chosen by the fool, as a safe medium through which the necessary degree of concealment might be given, and the edge of his sarcasm duely abated; a practice of which Shakspeare has afforded us many instances, and especially in his *Fool in King Lear*, whose scraps of old songs fully exemplify the aim and scope of this favourite of our ancestors.*

A few *household arrangements*, in addition to those developed in Sir John Harrington's orders, shall terminate this branch of our subject.

We have seen, when treating of the domestic economy of the country squire, that it was usual to take their banquet or dessert, in an arbour of the garden or orchard; and in town, the nobility and gentry, immediately after dinner and supper, adjourned to another room, for the purpose of enjoying their wine and fruit; this practice is alluded to by Shakspeare, in *Romeo and Juliet*†; and Beaufort, in the *Unnatural Combat* of Massinger, says:—

“ We'll *dine* in the great room, but let the musick
And *banquet* be prepared here;” ‡

* We must here observe, that the Baron of Brandwardine's Fool, in *Waverley*, is an admirable copy of the character, as drawn by Shakspeare; and, as the work seems a faithful picture of existing manners in 1745, is a striking proof of the retention of this curious personage, until a recent period.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xx. p. 72.

‡ Gifford's Edition of Massinger, vol. i. p. 167.; and vol. iv. p. 29.

a custom which it is astonishing the delicacy and refinement of modern manners have not *generally* adopted.

As our ancestors, during the greater part of the period we are considering, possessed not the conveniency of eating with forks, and were, therefore, compelled to make use of their fingers, it became an essential point of good manners, to wash the hands immediately *before* dinner and supper, as well as afterwards: thus Petruchio, on the entrance of his servants with supper, says, addressing his wife, —

“Come, Kate, and *wash*, and welcome heartily.”*

In the fifteenth item of Harrington's Orders, we find that *no man was allowed to come to the kitchen without reasonable cause*, an injunction which may appear extraordinary; but, in those days, it was customary, in order to prevent the cook being disturbed in his important duties, to keep the rest of the men aloof, and, when dinner was ready, he summoned them to carry it on the table, by knocking loudly on the dresser with his knife: thus in Massinger's *Unnatural Combat*, Beaufort's steward says, —

“When the dresser, the cook's drum, thunders, Come on,
The service will be lost else;”†

a practice which gave rise to the phraseology, *he knocks to the dresser*, or, *he warns to the dresser*, as synonymous with the annunciation that, “dinner is ready.”

It was usual, also, especially where the domestic fool was retained, to keep an ape or a monkey, as a companion for him, and he is frequently represented with this animal on his shoulders. Monkeys, likewise, appear to have been an indispensable part of a lady's establishment, and, accordingly, Ben Jonson, in his *Cynthia's Revels*,

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ix. p. 133.

† Gifford's Massinger, vol. i. p. 166.; and Dodsley's Old Plays, by Reed, vol. xii. p. 430.

represents one of his characters as asserting, "the gentleman (I'll undertake with him) is a man of fair living, and able to maintain a lady in *her two caroches a day, besides pages, monkeys, parachitoes, with such attendants as she shall think meet for her turn.*" *

Beside monkeys and parachitoes, this quotation also proves, that *caroches*, a species of coach, were common in 1600, when Jonson's play was first acted. The *coach* and *caroch*, vehicles differing probably rather in size than form, are thus distinguished by Green, who in his *Tu Quoque*, 1641, speaks of

———— "the keeping of a *coach*
For country, and *caroch* for London;" †

and, indeed, in 1595, they seem to have been equally general, for the author of *Quippes for upstart newfangled Gentlewomen*, says:—

"Our wantons now in coaches dash
From house to house, from street to street." ‡

The era of their introduction into this country has been recorded by Taylor, the water-poet. "In the year 1564," he remarks, "one William Boonen, a Dutchman, brought *first* the use of coaches hither, and the said Boonen was Queene Elizabeth's coachman; for indeede a coach was a strange monster in those days, and the sight of it put both horse and man into amazement: some said it was a great crab shell brought out of China, and some imagined it to be one of the Pagan Temples, in which the Cannibals adored the divell; but at last those doubts were cleared, and coach-making became a substantial trade." §

So substantial, indeed, had this trade become in 1601, that on the 7th of November of the same year, an act was introduced into the House of Lords, "to restrain the *excessive and superfluous use of*

* Act iv. sc. 2.

† Ancient British Drama, vol. ii. p. 546. col. 1.

‡ Restituta, vol. iii. p. 258.

§ The Works of Taylor, the Water Poet, 1630. p. 240.

coaches, within this realm * ;” it was rejected, however, on the second reading, and the trade of coach-making went on progressively increasing.

The extravagancy of domestic economy, with regard to these machines, and the servants who were deemed necessary, as their accompaniment, is strikingly depicted in the following extract from a letter written shortly after their marriage, by Lady Compton, to her husband, William Lord Compton, a few years subsequent to the death of Shakspeare. After several *items* equally *moderate* with those we are going to transcribe, she thus proceeds :—“ Alsoe, I will have 6 or 8 gentlemen ; and I will have my twoe coaches, one lyned with velvett to myselfe, wth 4 very fayre horses, and a coache for my woemen, lyned wth sweete cloth, one laced wth gold, the other wth scarlett, and laced with watched lace and silver, wth 4 good horses. Alsoe, I will have twoe coachmen, one for my owne coache, the other for my women. Alsoe, att any tyme when I travayle, I will be allowed not only carroches, and spare horses for me and my women, but I will have such carryadgs, as shal be fittinge for all orderly ; not pestringe my things wth my woemens, nor theirs wth either chambermayds, or theirs wth wase maids. Alsoe, for laundresses, when I travayle I will have them sent away before wth the carryadgs to see all safe, and the chambermayds I will have goe before wth the groomes, that a chamber may be ready, sweete and cleane. Alsoe, for that yt is indecent to croud upp myself wth my gentl. usher in my coache, I will have him to have a convenyent horse to attend me either in city or country. And I must have 2 footemen. And my desire is, that you defray all the chardges for me. †

Of the MANNERS and CUSTOMS of this period, the next branch of our present enquiry, we shall open a short review, by sketching the prominent features of Elizabeth’s personal character, which must,

* Vide Lords’ Journals, vol. ii. p. 229.

† Vide Gifford’s Massinger, vol. iv. pp. 43, 44. note ex Autog. in Bibl. Harl.

necessarily, have had great influence, not only on her courtiers, but on society at large. As a monarch, she was, with few exceptions, truly worthy of admiration; but, as a woman, she often exhibits such a series of weaknesses and frailties, as must excite astonishment, as well from the force of contrast, as from their own turpitude and folly.

The most valuable and praise-worthy part of her private character, her literary accomplishments, her love of learning, and her encouragement of letters, together with the influence which they exerted over the minds of her subjects, have been considered, at some length, in the first volume of this work *; and to the favourable side of the picture, we must here add, that she was equally eminent for some acquirements more peculiarly feminine. Among these, her skill in needle-work has been more than once particularly celebrated, her excellence in which stimulated the ladies of her reign to more than ordinary exertion in this useful department. "The various kinds of needle-work practised by our indefatigable grandmothers," observes Mr. Douce, "if enumerated, would astonish even the most industrious of our modern ladies;" and he adds, that "many curious books of patterns for lace and all sorts of needle-work were formerly published." †

But this rare example, in a monarch, of industry and economy, and the still more important acquisitions of literature and science,

* Part II. chapter ii.

† Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 94. — Mr. Douce gives the title-pages of several publications of this kind, in 1588, 1591, 1598, and 1599; and, lastly, describes one called "The needles excellency," illustrated with copper-plates, and adds, — "prefixed to the patterns are sundry poems in commendation of the needle, and describing the characters of ladies who have been eminent for their skill in needle-work, among which are *Queen Elizabeth* and the Countess of Pembroke. These poems were composed by John Taylor, the water poet. It appears that the work (in 1640) had gone through twelve impressions, and yet a copy is now scarcely to be met with. This may be accounted for by supposing that such books were generally cut to pieces, and used by women to work upon or transfer to their samplers.—It appears to have been originally published in the reign of James the First." P. 96.

were overwhelmed by a host of foibles, among which, none were more remarkable than her extreme vanity and coquetry, and at a period too, when she had reason to expect, from her infirmities, and the common law of nature, that death was not far distant. To be thought beautiful, young, and agile, and an object of amorous affection, to the last moment of her existence, seems to have been her chief ambition as a woman; nor could any language on these topics, when addressed to her, be too complimentary, amatory, or glowing. When *sixty years of age*, Raleigh thus speaks of her, in a letter intended for her perusal:—"I that was wont to see her riding like Alexander, hunting like Diana, walking like Venus, the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks, like a nymph, sometimes sitting in the shade, like a goddess, sometimes singing like an angel, sometimes playing like Orpheus; behold the sorrow of this world! once amiss hath bereaved me of all*;" and when *sixty-eight*, Lord Mountjoy, Lord Deputy of Ireland, thus addresses her:—"When I have done all that I can, the uttermost effects of my labours doe appeare so little to my owne zeale to doe more, that I am often ashamed to present them unto your *faire* and royall eyes. I beseeche your Majestie to thinke, that in a matter of so great importance, my affection will not suffer me to commit so grosse a fault against your service, as to doe any thing, for the which I am not able to give you a very good account, the which above all things, I desire to do at your *owne royall feete*, and that your service here, may give me leave to *fill my eyes with their onely deere and desired object*."† It was at the same advanced period of life, too, when the sister of Lord Essex, interceding for her brother's life, tells Her Majesty,—"Early did I hope this morning, to have had mine eyes blessed with your majesty's *beauty*.—That her brother's life, his love, his service to her *beauties*, did not deserve so hard a punishment. That he would be disabled

* Vide Chalmers's Apology, p. 45., from Murden, p. 657.

† Moryson's Itinerary, p. 233.

from ever serving again his sacred goddess! whose excellent *beauties* and perfections ought to feel more compassion.”*

Her affectation of *youth*, in order to render language such as this somewhat appropriate, was carried to the most ridiculous excess; “there is almost none,” remarks Harrington, “that wayted in Queene Elizabeth’s court, and observed any thing, but can tell that it pleased her much to seeme and to be thought, and to be told, that *she looked younge* ;” and he then relates, in illustration of his assertion, that when Bishop Rudd preached before the Queen, in Lent, 1596, after giving an arithmetical description, with a manifest allusion to Her Majesty, of the grand climacterical year, he put a prayer into the mouth of the Queen, in which she is represented as quoting, with reference to herself, the following passage from Ecclesiastes: When the grinders shall be few in number, and they wax darke that looke out of the windowes, &c., and the daughters of singing shall be abased; but, the sermon being concluded, “the Queene (as the manner was) opened the window, (of her closet) but she was so far from giving him thanks, or good countenance, that she said plainly, ‘he should have kept his arithmetick for himselfe; but I see (said she) the greatest clerks are not the wisest men;’ and so went away for the time discontented.” Three days afterwards, however, she declared before Harrington and her courtiers, that “the good bishop was deceaved in supposing she was so decayed in her limbs and senses, as himselfe, perhaps, and other of that age are wont to be; she thankt God that neither her stomache nor strength, nor her voyce for singing, nor fingering for instruments, nor lastly, her sight was any whit decayed.”†

Her strength and agility, she endeavoured to prove, were not diminished, by dancing, or attempting to dance, to nearly the end of her reign. Being present at Lord Herbert’s marriage, in 1600, after supper, dancing commenced by ladies and gentlemen in masques;

* Walpole’s Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors apud Park, vol. ii. p. 89.

† Nugæ Antiquæ, vol. ii. pp. 216—218.

and Mrs. Fetton, one of the masquers, "went to the Queen, and wooed her to dawncce. Her Majesty asked what she was? *Affection*, she said. *Affection*, said the Queen, *is false*. Yet her Majestie rose and dawnced!"* She was now in her sixty-ninth year!

Nor was she less *artful* than vain; cunning and finesse might be often necessary in her political capacity, but she carried the same wiliness and duplicity into all the relations of private life. Sir John Harrington has admirably drawn her disposition in these respects, and has painted her blandishments, her mutability of temper, and her deceptive conduct, with a masterly pencil. "Hir mynde," he observes, "was oftime like the gentle aire that comethe from the westerly pointe in a summer's morn; 'twas sweete and refreshinge to all arounde her:—again, she coulde pute forthe suche alteracions,—as lefte no doubtynge whose daughter she was.—By art and nature together so blended, it was difficulte to fynde hir right humour at any tyme;—for few knew how to aim their shaft against her cunning.—I have seen her smile," he adds, "soothe with great semblance of good likinge to all arounde, and cause everie one to open his moste inwarde thought to her; when, on a sudden, she would ponder in pryvate on what had passed, write down all their opinions, draw them out as occasion required, and sometyme disprove to their faces what had been delivered a month before. Hence she knew every one's parte, and by thus *fishinge*, as Hatton sayed, she caught many poor fish, who little knew what snare was laid for them."†

Of her boundless inclination to circumvent and deceive, a most ludicrous instance is related by Sir Arthur Wheldon, who tells us, that when Sir Roger Aston was sent with letters from James to the Queen (which was often the case), he did never come to deliver any—but he was placed in the Lobby; the hangings being turned him, (lifted up) where he might see the Queene dancing to a little fiddle, which was to no other end, than he should tell his master by her

* Nichols's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, vol. ii.

† Nugæ Antiquæ, vol. i. pp. 355. 357—359.

youthfull disposition, how likely he was to come to the possession of the Crown he so much thirsted after." *

Extreme *jealousy* was another leading feature in the manners of Elizabeth, which, far from being the result of her exalted rank, was, indeed, most apparent in her domestic life and relations. She could bear no female near her who, in beauty, accomplishments, or dress, was likely either to surpass or rival her; and the death of the unfortunate Mary may be attributed rather to an inextinguishable envy of her personal charms, than to any apprehensions of the establishment of her claim to the throne of England. How anxious she was to be thought more beautiful and accomplished than her sister Queen, is vividly delineated by Sir John Melvill, who, in his numerous interviews with Elizabeth, during his residence in London, describes her as changing her dress for him every day; as dancing before him, and playing on the virginals, merely for the purpose of ascertaining whether he thought she or Mary most excelled in dress, dancing, and music. She even went so far as to enquire, whether he considered her hair or his mistress's to be the fairest and most entitled to admiration, and, at length, asked him which was tallest, and, on his answering, that the Scottish Queen surpassed her in height,—“Then,” saith she, “she is too high; for I myself am neither too high, nor too low †.”

Nothing is better known in our history than Elizabeth's personal chastisement of the unhappy Earl of Essex; and so little, indeed, was she accustomed, on any occasion, to the control of her passions, that her courtiers daily dreaded similar inflictions. “The Queene seemede troubled to daye,” says Harrington; “Hatton came out from her presence with *ill countenance*, and pulled me aside by the girdle, and saide, in secret waie, ‘If you have any suite to daie, I praye you put it aside, *The sunne doth not shine.*’ ’Tis this accursed Spanishe businesse; so

* The Court and Character of King James, 12mo. 1650. pp. 5, 6.

† Vide Melvill's Memoirs.

will not I adventure her Highnesse *choller*, leste she shoulde *collar* me *also*." *

Even in the expression of her dislike on such trivial matters as the cut of a coat, or the depth of a fringe, she spared neither the public exposure of her courtiers, nor the adoption of the most masculine and vindictive contempt. "The Queene loveth to see me," says Sir John Harrington, "in my laste frize jerkin, and saithe 'tis well enough cutt. I will have another made liken to it. I do remember *she spit on Sir Mathew's fringed clothe*, and said, *the fooles wit was gone to ragges*. — *Heav'n spare me from suche jibinge*." †

If such petulant and rough treatment fell to the lot of her courtiers in public, we may rest assured, that in private, her domestics, and ladies of honour, experienced not a milder fate. Manual correction, indeed, we are told, was a frequent resource with Her Majesty, and even when chiding for "small neglects," Fenton tells us, in a letter to Sir John Harrington, dated May, 1597, that it was "in such wise, as to make these fair maids often cry and bewail in piteous sort." ‡ In short, to adopt the language of Sir Robert Cecil, who had an intimate knowledge both of her public and private character, she "was more than a man, and (in troth) sometyme less than a woman." §

Elizabeth, indeed, possessed many qualities of the most exalted rank, and her *courage*, *magnanimity*, *prudence*, and *political wisdom*, were such as to redeem the foibles which we have enumerated. They were virtues, of which her successor was totally destitute; for the *manners* of James may be truly painted by the epithets, *frivolity*, *pusillanimity*, *extravagance*, *pedantry*, and *credulity*.

Some of the most striking traits in his character have been drawn with great strength and vivacity in Sir John Harrington's description of an interview with this monarch, in January, 1607:—"He enquyrede," says he, "much of lernynge, and showed me his owne in suche

* *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. pp. 175, 176.

† *Ibid.* p. 235.

‡ *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 167.

§ *Ibid.* p. 345.

sorte, as made me remember my examiner at Cambridge aforetyme. He soughte muche to knowe my advances in philosophie, and utterede profounde sentences of Aristotle, and suche lyke wryters, whiche I had never reade, and which some are bolde enoughe to saye, others do not understand: but this I must passe by. The Prince did nowe presse my readinge to him parte of a canto in Ariosto; praysede my utterance, and said he had been informede of manie, as to my lernynge, in the tyme of the Queene. He asked me ‘what I thoughte pure witte was made of; and whom it did best become? Whether a Kynge shoulde not be the best clerke in his own countrie; and, if this lande did not entertayne goode opinion of his lernynge and good wisdom?’ His Majestie did much presse for my opinion touchinge the power of Satane in matter of witchcraft; and askede me, with muche gravitie,—‘If I did trulie understande, why the devil did worke more with anciente women than others?’ I did not refraine from a scurvey jeste, and even saide (notwithstandinge to whom it was said) that—we were taught hereof in scripture, where it is tolde, that the devil walketh in dry places.—His Highnesse tolde me the Queene his mothers deathe was visible in Scotlande before it did really happen, being, as he saide, ‘spoken of in secrete by those whose power of sight presentede to them a bloodie heade dancinge in the aire.’ He then did remarke muche on this gifte, and saide he had soughte out of certaine bookes a sure waie to attaine knowledge of future chances. Hereat, he namede many bookes, which I did not knowe, nor by whom written; but advised me not to consult some authors which woulde leade me to evill consultations—at lengthe he saide: Now, Sir, you have seene my wisdom in some sorte, and I have pried into yours. I praye you, do me justice in your reporte, and in good season, I will not fail to add to your understandinge, in suche pointes as I maye find you lacke amendment.”* This is an extract which lays open the heart of James, and speaks volumes on the subject.

* Ibid. vol. i. pp. 367—370.

The manners of the reigning monarch imperceptibly give a colouring to those of every class of society, stronger in proportion to its approximation to the source; a remark which is fully exemplified in the females of the reign of Elizabeth, those especially who constituted, or were near, the court, copying, according to their ability, the virtues, accomplishments, and foibles of the Queen. They were learned, skilled in needle-work, and wrote a beautiful hand, in emulation of the Queen's, which, in the earlier period of her life, was peculiarly elegant; but they were, also, vain, capricious, and in their habits and language often masculine and coarse. It was customary for ladies of the first rank to give manual correction to their servants of both sexes; a practice of which Shakspeare has given us an instance in his *Twelfth-Night*, where Maria, alluding to Malvolio's whimsical appearance, says, "I know my lady will strike him." * Nor were often their daily occupations, or their language, when provoked, in the least degree more feminine; we are told that Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, "was a builder, a buyer and seller of estates, a money lender, a farmer, and a merchant of lead, coals and timber;" and her daughter Mary, who married Gilbert, seventh Earl of Shrewsbury, sent the following message to Sir Thomas Stanhope, with whom she had quarrelled, by one George Williamson, which message was "delivered by the said Williamson, February 15, 1592, in the presence of certain persons whose names were subscribed — 'My Lady hath commanded me to say thus much to you. That though you be more wretched, vile, and miserable, than any creature living; and, for your wickedness, become more ugly in shape than the vilest toad in the world; and one to whom none of reputation would vouchsafe to send any message; yet she hath thought good to send thus much to you — that she be contented you should live, (and doth nowaies wish your death) but to this end: that all the plagues and miseries that may befall any man may light upon such a caitiff as you are;

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 353.

and that you should live to have all your friends forsake you ; and, without your great repentance, which she looketh not for because your hath been so bad, you will be damned perpetually in hell fire.' With many other opprobrious and hatefull words, which could not be remembered, because the bearer would deliver it but once, as he said he was commanded ; but said if he had failed in any thing, it was in speaking it more mildly, and not in terms of such disdain as he was commanded." *

Of the male population of this period, the manners seem to have been compounded from the characters of the two sovereigns. Like Elizabeth, they were brave, magnanimous, and prudent ; and sometimes, like James, credulous, curious, and dissipated. On the virtues, happily from their notoriety, there is little occasion to comment ; foreigners, as well as natives, bearing testimony to their existence : thus Hentzner tells us,—“ The English are serious, like the Germans ; —they are powerful in the field, successful against their enemies, impatient of any thing like slavery.” † But of the foibles and vices, as more evanescent and mutable, it may be interesting to state a few particulars.

Of the *credulity* and superstition which abounded during this era, and which had been fostered by the weakness of James, a sufficient detail has already been given in a former part of this work ; and we shall here merely add, that Alchemy was one of the foolish pursuits of the day. Scot, who has devoted the fourteenth book of his treatise on the “ Discoverie of Witchcraft,” to this subject, tells us that the admirable description given by Chaucer of this folly, in his *Chanones Yemannes* prologue and tale, still strictly applied to its cultivators in 1584, who continued to

“ looke ill-favouredlie,
And were alwaies tired beggarlie,

* Lodge's Illustrations of British History, vol. i. Introduction, pp. xviii. xix. from a MS. in the possession of the Rev. Sir Richard Kaye, Dean of Lincoln.

† Hentzner's Travels, pp. 63, 64.

So as by smelling and thredbare araie,
These folke are knowne and discerned alwaie," *

An insatiable *curiosity* for seeing strange sights, and hearing strange adventures, together with an eager desire for visiting foreign countries, prevailed in an extraordinary degree during the age of Shakspeare, who has, in several parts of his works, satirized these propensities with much humour. In the *Tempest*, for instance, he has held up to scorn the first of these foibles in an admirable strain of sarcasm: — "A strange fish! Were I in England now, (as once I was,) and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver; there would this monster make a man; any strange beast there makes a man: when they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian †;" a passage which Mr. Douce has very appositely illustrated by a quotation from Batman. "Of late years," says the Gothic Pliny, "there hath been brought into England, the cases or skinnies of such crocodiles to be seene, and much money given for the sight thereof; the policy of strangers laugh at our folly, either that we are too wealthy, or else that we know not how to bestow our money." ‡

Of the influence arising from the relation of strange adventures, we have a striking proof in the character of Othello, who won the affections of his mistress by the detail of his "hair-breadth scapes:" —

"Wherein of antres vast, and deserts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose head touch heaven
It was 'his' hint to speak." §

It appears, indeed, that the conversation of this period very frequently turned upon the wonderful discoveries of travellers, whose

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, 4to. pp. 355, 356.—Scot has taken great liberties with the text of Chaucer, both in modernising the language, and in tacking together widely separated lines and couplets.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 83. Act ii. sc. 2.

‡ Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 14.—Batman upon Bartholome, fol. 359. b.

§ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xix. pp. 269, 270.

voyages to, and travels in the New World then occupied much of the public attention. Exaggeration, from a love of importance, too often accompanied these narratives, a licence which our poet has happily ridiculed in the following lines :—

“ When we were boys,
 Who would believe that there were mountaineers
 Dew-lapp'd like bulls, whose throats had hanging at them
 Wallets of flesh? or that there were such men,
 Whose heads stood in their breasts? which now we find
Each putter-out on five for one, will bring us
*Good warrant of.” **

The close of this passage alludes to a practice then common among the numerous travellers of those times, of putting out their money, especially when about to undertake a long and hazardous journey, for the purpose of receiving exorbitant interest on their return; a custom which, Moryson informs us, originated among the nobility, but before 1617 had become frequent even with men of base condition. † Thus we find Ben Jonson, in 1599, representing Puntarvolo, in *Every Man out of his Humour*, disclosing such a scheme :—“ I do intend,” says he, “ this year of jubilee coming on, to travel: and, because I will not altogether go upon expence, I am determined to put forth some *five thousand pound*, to be paid me *five for one*, upon the return of myself, my wife, and my dog from the Turk's court in Constantinople. If all or either of us miscarry in the journey, 'tis gone: if we be successful, why there will be *five and twenty thousand pound* to entertain time withal.” ‡

To such a height had this passion for travelling attained, that those who were not able to accomplish a distant expedition, crossed over to France or Italy, and gave themselves as many airs on their return, as if they had been to the antipodes; a species of affectation which Shakspeare acutely satirizes in the following terms :—“ Farewell,

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. pp. 114, 115.

† Itinerary, Part I. p. 198.

‡ Whalley's Works of Ben Jonson; act ii. sc. 3.

monsieur traveller; look, you lisp, and wear strange suits; disable all the benefits of your own country; be out of love with your nativity, and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are; or I will scarce think you have swam in a gondola.”*

An equally severe castigation has been bestowed on these superficial rambles, in *Observations and Discourses*, published by Edward Blount, in 1620, who informs us, that their discourse made them every where ridiculous. “The name of English gelding,” he adds, “frights them; and thence they take occasion to fall into the commendation of a mule, or an ass. A pasty of venison makes them sweat, and then swear that the only delicacies be mushrooms, or caveare, or snails. A toast in beer or ale drives them into madness; and so to declaim against the absurd and ignorant customs of their own country, and thereupon digress into the commendation of drinking their wine refreshed with ice or snow.”

The pernicious habit of *gaming* had become almost universal in the days of Elizabeth, and, if we may credit George Whetstone, had reached a prodigious degree of excess. Speaking of the licentiousness of the stage previous to the appearance of Shakspeare, he adds, — “But there are in the bowels of this famous citie, farre more daungerous plays, and little reprehended: that wicked playes of the dice, first invented by the devill, (as Cornelius Agrippa wryteth,) and frequented by unhappy men: the detestable roote, upon which a thousand villanies grow.

“The nurses of thease (worse than heathenysh) hellish exercises are places called *ordinary tables*: of which there are in London, more in number to honour the devyll, than churches to serve the living God.

“I cōstantly determine to crosse the streets, where these vile houses (ordinaries) are planted, to blesse me from the inticements of them, which in very deed are many, and the more dangerous in that

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. viii. p. 138. As You Like It, act iv. sc. 1.

they please with a vain hope of gain. Insomuch on a time, I heard a distemperate dicer solemnly sweare that he faithfully beleevd, *that dice were first made of the bones of a witch, and cards of her skin*, in which there hath ever sithence remained an enchantment y^t who-soever once taketh delight in either, he shall never have power utterly to leave them, for quoth he, I a hundred times vowed to leave both, yet have not the grace to forsake either.” *

No opportunity for the practice of this ruinous habit seems to have been omitted, and we find the modern mode of gambling, by taking the odds, to have been fully established towards the latter end of the sixteenth century; for Gilbert Talbot, writing to his father, the Earl of Shrewsbury, on May the 15th, 1579, after informing His Lordship, that the matter of the Queen's marriage with Monsieur “is growne very colde,” subjoins, “and yet I know a man may take a thousande pounds, in this towne, to be bounde to pay doble so muche when Mons^r. cūmeth into Inglande, and treble so muche when he marryeth the Q. Ma^{tie}., and if he nether doe the one nor the other, to gayne the thousande poundes cleare.” †

Duelling, at this period, from its frequency, had given rise to a complicated system of rules for its regulation, and to fixed schools for its practice and improvement. The “Noble Science of Defence,” as it was called, included three *degrees*, a *Master's*, a *Provost's*, and a *Scholar's*, and for each of these a regular prize was played. In order, also, to obviate disputes, “four *Ancient Masters of Defence*” were constituted, who resided “in the city of London,” and to whom not only difficult points of honour were referred, but tribute was likewise paid by all inferior professors of the science.

Nor were books wanting to explain, and to adjust, the causes, and the modes of quarrelling. Of these the two most celebrated were

* “The Enemie to Vnthyrtinesse: publishing by Lawes, documents and disciplines, &c. By George Whetstons, Gent. Printed at London by Richard Jones. 1586.” 4to. pp. 24. 32.—Vide *British Bibliographer*, vol. iii. pp. 601—604.

† Lodge's *Illustrations of British History*, vol. ii. pp. 217, 218.

written by *Saviolo* and *Caranza*, authors who are repeatedly mentioned by Shakspeare, Jonson, and Fletcher. The absurd minuteness of *Saviolo's* treatise, entitled, *Of Honour and honourable Quarrels*, 4to. 1595, has been ridiculed with exquisite humour in *As You Like It*, where Touchstone says

“ O sir, we quarrel in print, by the book ; — we met, and found the quarrel was upon the seventh cause.

Jaq. How did you find the quarrel on the seventh cause?

Touch. Upon a lie seven times removed ; — as thus : I did dislike the cut of a certain courtier's beard ; he sent me word, if I said his beard was not cut well, he was in the mind it was : This is called the *Retort courteous*. If I sent him word again, it was not well cut, he would send me word, he cut it to please himself : This is called the *Quip modest*. If again, it was not well cut, he disabled my judgment : This is call'd the *Reply churlish*. If again, it was not well cut, he would answer, I spake not true : This is call'd the *Reproof valiant*. If again, it was not well cut, he would say, I lie : This is called the *Counter-check quarrelsome* : and so to the *Lie circumstantial*, and the *Lie direct*. — All these you may avoid, but the lie direct ; and you may avoid that too, with an *If*. I knew when seven justices could not take up a quarrel ; but when the parties were met themselves, one of them thought but of an *If*, as, *If you said so, then I said so* ; and they shook hands, and swore brothers. Your *If* is the only peace-maker ; much virtue in *If*.” *

Nor is this much exaggerated ; for *Saviolo* has a chapter on the *Diversity of Lies*, and enumerates the *Lie certain*, the *conditional Lie*, the *Lie in general*, the *Lie in particular*, the *foolish Lie*, and the *returning back of the Lie*.

A taste for *gossiping*, as well amongst the *male* as female sex, was more than usually prevalent at this epoch. An anonymous writer of 1620, speaking of *male gossips*, describes their trifling and vexatiously intrusive manners, in a way which leads us to conclude, that the evil was severely felt, and of great magnitude : — “ It is a wonder,” says he, “ to see what multitudes there be of all sorts that make this their only business, and in a manner spend their whole time in compliment ; as if they were born to no other end, bred to no other purpose, had nothing else to do, than to be a kind of living walking ghosts, to haunt and persecute others with unnecessary observation. —

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. viii. pp. 171. 177. 179, 180, 181. 183.

“ If these giddy goers be forced to give a reason for their wheeling up and down the streets, their answer is, they know not else how to pass their time. And how tedious it is, for a man that accounts his hours, to be subject to these vacancies, and apply himself to lose a day with such time-passers ; who neither come for business, nor out of true friendship, but only to spend the day ; as if one had nothing else to do, but to supply their idle time ! —

“ After they have asked you how you do, and told some old or fabulous news, laughed twice or thrice in your face, and censured those they know you love not (when, peradventure, the next place they go to, is to them — where they will be as courteous to you) ; spoke a few words of fashions and alterations ; — made legs and postures of the last edition ; with three or four diminutive oaths and protestations of their service and observance ; they then retire.”

The *diminutive oaths*, mentioned at the close of this quotation, were, unfortunately, considered as ornaments of conversation, and adopted by both sexes, in order to give spirit and vivacity to their language ; a shocking practice, which seems to have been rendered fashionable by the very reprehensible habit of the Queen, whose oaths were neither diminutive nor rare ; for it is said, that she never spared an oath in public speech or private conversation when she thought it added energy to either. After this example in the highest classes, we need not be surprised when Stubbes tells us, speaking of the great body of the people, that, “ if they speake but three or four words, yet they must be interlaced with a bloudie oath or two.”

These abominable expletives appear to have formed no small share of the language of *compliment*, a species of simulation which was carried to an extraordinary height in the days of our poet : thus Marston, describing the finished gallant, says, —

“ Marke nothing but his clothes,
His new stampt *complement*, his cannon oathes ;
Marke those.” *

* Scourge of Villanie, 1599. book ii. sat. 7.

Decker, apostrophising the courtiers of his day, and playing upon a term of Guido's musical scale, exclaims, — "You courtiers, that do nothing but sing the gamut A-Re of *complimental courtesy* *," and Shakspeare, painting this

——— "sweet, sweet poison for the age's tooth."

represents the Bastard in his *King John*, thus addressing a travelled fop:—

——— "My dear sir,
(Thus leaning on mine elbow, I begin,
I shall beseech you — That is question now;
And then comes answer like an A B C book: —
O sir, says answer, *at your best command*;
At your employment; *at your service*, sir: —
No, sir, says question, *I, sweet sir*, *at yours*:
And so, ere answer knows what question would,
(Saving in dialogue of *compliment*;
And talking of the Alps, and Appennines,
The Pyrenean, and the river Po,)
It draws toward supper." †

"What a deal of synamon and ginger is sacrificed to dissimulation," observes Sir William Cornwallis in 1601, *O, how blessed do I take mine eyes for presenting me with this sight! O Signior, the star that governs my life is contentment, give me leave to interre myself in your arms! — Not so, sir, it is too unworthy an inclosure to contain such preciousness, &c.* This, and a cup of drink, makes the time as fit for a departure as can be." ‡

A peculiar species of compliment existed among the scientific and literary characters of our author's times, in permitting those who looked up to them with reverence and esteem, to address them by the endearing appellation of *Father*; adopting them, in fact, as their literary offspring, and designating them, in their works, by the title of

* Gull's Horn-book, p. 15.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. x. pp. 360—362.

‡ Essayes by Sir William Cornwallyes, the younger. Essay 28.

sons. In conformity with this custom, Ben Jonson adopted not less than twelve or fourteen persons for his sons, among whom were, Cartright, Randolph, Brome, &c. ; and the practice continued to be observed until the end of the seventeenth century ; for in 1676, Charles Cotton dedicated his *Complete Angler* to his “ most worthy *father* and friend, Mr. Izaak Walton, the elder ;” and says in the body of his work, “ he gives me leave to call him *Father*, and I hope is not yet ashamed of his *Adopted Son*.” *

This complimentary paternity Shakspeare has introduced in his *Troilus and Cressida*, where Ajax, addressing Nestor, says, — “ Shall I call you father ?” to which the venerable Grecian replies, “ Ay, my good son.” †

To this sketch of manners, we shall add a brief account of some customs, which more peculiarly belong to the province of Police, commencing with the inaugural ceremonies attendant on the Lord Mayor's entrance on the duties of his office. The pageantry and magnificence which once accompanied this periodical assumption of power, may be estimated from the following description, taken from a manuscript, written in 1575 : —

“ The day of St. Simon and Jude he (the Mayor) entrethe into his estate and offyce : and the next daie following he goeth by water to Westmynster, in most tryumphyke maner. His barge beinge garnished with the armes of the citie : and nere the sayd barge goeth a shyppbote of the Queenes Ma^{tie}, beinge trymed upp, and rigged lyke a shippe of warre, with dyvers peces of ordinance, standards, penons, and targetts of the proper armes of the sayd Mayor, the armes of the Citie, of his company ; and of the marchaunts adventurers, or of the staple, or of the company of the newe trades ; next before hym goeth the barge of the lyvery of his owne company, decked with their owne proper armes, then the bachelers barge, and so all the companies in London, in order, every one havinge their owne proper barge gar-

* Walton's *Complete Angler*, Bagster's edit. 1808, pp. 369. 380.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xv. pp. 328, 329.

nished with the armes of their company. And so passinge alonge the Thamise, landeth at Westmynster, where he taketh his othe in Thexcheker, beffore the judge there, (whiche is one of the chiefe judges of England,) whiche done, he returneth by water as afforsayd, and landeth at powles wharfe, where he and the reste of the Aldermen take their horses, and in great pompe passe through the greate streete of the citie, called Cheapside. And fyrste of all cometh ij great estandarts, one havinge the armes of the citie, and the other the armes of the Mayor's company; next them ij drommes and a flute, then an ensigne of the citie, and then about Ixx or Ixxx poore men marchinge ij and two togeather in blewe gownes, with redd sleeves and capps, every one bearinge a pyke and a target, wheron is paynted the armes of all them that have byn Mayor of the same company that this newe mayor is of. Then ij banners one of the kynges armes, the other of the Mayor's owne proper armes. Then a sett of hautboits playinge, and after them certayne wyfflers, in velvett cotes, and chaynes of golde, with white staves in their handes, then the pageant of tryumphe rychly decked, whereuppon by certayne fygures and wrytinges, some matter touchinge justice, and the office of a maiestrate is represented. Then xvj trompeters viij and viij in a company, havinge banners of the Mayor's company. Then certayne wyfflers in velvet cotes and chaynes, with white staves as aforesayde. Then the bachelers ij, and two together, in longe gownen, with crymson hoodes on their shoulders of sattyn; which bachelers are chosen every yeare of the same company that the Mayor is of, (but not of the lyvery,) and serve as gentlemen on that and other festivall daies, to wayte on the Mayor, beinge in nomber accordinge to the quantetie of the company, sometimes sixty or one hundred. After them xij trompeters more, with banners of the Mayor's company, then the dromme and flute of the citie, and an ensigne of the Mayor's company, and after, the waytes of the citie in blewe gownes, redd sleeves and capps, every one havinge his silver collar about his neck. Then they of the liverie in their longe gownes, every one havinge his hood on his lefte shoulder, halfe black and

halfe redd, the number of them is accordinge to the greatnes of the companye whereof they are. After them followe Sheriffes officers, and then the Mayor's officers, with other officers of the citie, as the comon sargent, and the chamberlayne; next before the Mayore goeth the sword-bearer, having on his headd, the cappe of honor, and the sworde of the citie in his right hande, in a riche skabarde, sett with pearle, and on his left hand goeth the comon cryer of the citie, with his great mace on his shoulder, all gilt. The Mayor hathe on a long gowne of skarlet, and on his lefte shoulder, a hood of black velvet, and a riche collar of gold of SS. about his neck, and with him rydeth the olde Mayor also, in his skarlet gowne, hood of velvet, and a chayne of golde about his neck. Then all the Aldermen ij and ij together, (amongst whom is the Recorder), all in skarlet gownes; and those that have byn Mayors, have chaynes of gold, the other have black velvett tippetts. The ij Shereffes come last of all, in their black skarlet gownes and chaynes of golde.

"In this order they passe alonge through the citie, to the Guyld-hall, where they dyne that daie, to the number of 1000 persons, all at the charge of the Mayor and the ij Shereffes. This feast costeth 400*l.*, whereof the Mayor payeth 200*l.*, and eche of the Shereffes 100*l.* Imediately after dyner, they go the church of St. Paule, every one of the aforesaid poore men, bearrynge staffe torches and targetts, whiche torches are lighted when it is late, before they come from evenynge prayer."*

Had the police of the city been as strictly regulated, as were the ceremonies attending the inauguration of its chief magistrate, the inhabitants of London, in Queen Elizabeth's days, would have had little cause of complaint, with regard to personal protection; but,

* "A breffe description of the Royall Citie of London, capitall citie of this realme of England. (City Arms.) Wrytten by me William Smythe citezen and haberdasher of London, 1575." MS.

"This compilation," says Mr. Haslewood, "forms a quarto volume of moderate thickness, and was intended for publication." — Vide British Bibliographer, vol. i. pp. 539—542.

though the *Statutes of the Streets* were numerous and rigid, and sometimes ridiculously minute, for No. 22. enacts, that “no man shall blowe any horne in the night, within this citie, or whistle after the houre of nyne of the clock in the night, under paine of imprisonment *,” yet they were so ill executed, that, even in the day-time, disturbances of the most atrocious kind were deemed matters of common occurrence. Thus Gilbert Talbot and his wife, writing to the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury, consider the following acts of violence as *trifling matters*: — “On Thursday laste, (Feb. 13th, 1587,) as my Lorde Rytche was rydyng in the streates, there was one Wyndam that stode in a dore, and shotte a dagge at him, thynkyng to have slayne him; but God p̄vyded so for my L. Rytche, that this Wyndam apoyntyng his servante y^r mornynge to charge his dagge wth 11 bulletts, the fellow, doubtinge he mente to doe sum myschefe wth it, charged it only wth powder and paper, and no bullett; and so this L^r. lyfe was thereby saved, for otherwyse he had beene slayne. Wyndam was p̄sently taken by my L. Rytche’s men, and, beyng broughte before the Counsell, confessed his intende, but the cause of his quarrell I knowe not; but he is com̄ytted to the Towre. The same daye, also, as S^r John Conway was goynge in the streetes, M^r Lodovyke Grevell came sodenly uppon him, and stroke him on the hedd wth a sworde, and but for one of S^r John Conways men, who warded the blow, he had cutt of his legges; yet did he hurte him sumwhat on bothe his shynns: The Councell sente for Lodovyke Grevell, and have com̄ytted him to the Marchallcye. I am forced to trouble yo^r Honors wth thes *tryflynge matters*, for I know no greater.”†

Yet a sufficient number of watchmen, constables, and justices of the peace, was not wanting. Of these, the first were armed with halberds, which, in Shakspeare’s time, were called *bills*, and they usually carried a lanthorn in one hand, and sometimes a bell in the

* Vide “The Statutes of the Streets,” printed by Wolfe, in 1595.

† Lodge’s Illustrations, vol. ii. p. 206.

other, resting the halberd on the shoulder. * Notwithstanding these official characters, however, the peace of the city was frequently more effectually preserved by the interference of the apprentices, than by that of the appointed guardians of public order; for it appears, from Shakspeare's dramas, that the cry of *Clubs!* was a signal for the apprentices to arm themselves with these weapons, and quell the disturbance. Thus in *King Henry the Eighth*, act v. sc. 3., the Porter's man says:—"I hit that woman who cried out, *clubs!* when I might see from far some forty truncheoneers draw to her succour, which were the hope of the Strand †;" and in *Henry the Sixth, Part the First*, even the Mayor of London is represented, on occasion of a quarrel between the partizans of the Duke of Gloucester and the Cardinal of Winchester, as threatening to call in similar assistance:—

"I'll call for *clubs*, if you will not away." ‡

We cannot wonder that the inferior officers of the Police should be slack in the performance of their duty, when we recollect, that the Justices of the Peace, in these days, especially those resident in the metropolis, were so open to bribery, that many of them obtained the appellation of *Basket Justices*; nor did a member of the House of Commons hesitate, during the reign of Elizabeth, to describe a justice of the peace as "an animal who for half a dozen of chickens would readily dispense with a dozen penal laws." §

Many customs of a miscellaneous nature might with ease be extracted from the dramas of our poet; but to give them any relative bearing or concatenation would be nearly impossible, and a totally insulated detail of minute circumstances, would prove tedious to the

* The costume of the Watchman is thus represented in the title-page to Decker's "*O per se O*," &c. 4to. 1612, and is copied in Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vi. p. 97.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xv. p. 205.

‡ Ibid. vol. xiii. p. 36.

§ D'Ewes's Journals of Parliament, in Queen Elizabeth's Reign, p. 661. 664.

most persevering reader. Enough, we trust, has been collected to throw no feeble light on the general manners and modes of living, of the period under consideration, especially if it be recollected that the full picture is to be formed from a combination of this with the similar chapter, in a former part of the work, on the costume of rural life.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE DIVERSIONS OF THE METROPOLIS, AND THE COURT — THE STAGE; ITS USAGES,
AND ECONOMY.

OF the diversions of the metropolis and court, some were peculiar, and some were shared in common with the country. “The countrey hath his recreations,” observes Burton, “the city his several *Gymnicks* and *exercises*, *feasts* and *merry meetings*.” — “What so pleasant as to see some *Pageant* or sight go by, as at Coronations, Weddings, and such like solemnities, to see an Embassadour or a Prince met, received, entertained, with *Masks*, *Shews*, *Fireworks*, &c.*; and an old dramatic poet of 1590, gives us a still more copious list of town amusements:—

“ — Let nothing that's magnificent,
Or that may tend to London's graceful state,
Be unperform'd, as *shewes* and *solemne feastes*,
Watches in armour, *triumphes cresset*, *lights*,
Bonefires, *belles*, and *peales of ordinaunce*
And pleasure. See that *plaies* be published,
Mai-games and *masks*, with mirth and minstrelsie,
Pageants and *school-feastes*, beares and puppet-plaies. †

“Every *palace*,” continues Burton, “every *city* almost, hath his *peculiar walks*, *cloysters*, *terraces*, *groves*, *theatres*, *pageants*, *games*, and *several recreations* †;” and we purpose, in this chapter, giving some account of the leading articles thus enumerated, but more particularly of the stage, as being peculiarly connected with the design and texture of our work.

* Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, fol., 8th edit., p. 171. col. i.

† “The Pleasant and Stately Morall of the Three Lordes and Three Ladies of London,” &c., London. Printed by Jhones, at the Rose and Crowne, neere Holburne Bridge, 1590. Vide Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes*, Introduct., p. xxviii.; and Beloe's *Anecdotes of Literature*, vol. i. p. 350, 351.

‡ *Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 172. col. i.

As the principal object, therefore, of the present discussion, will be the amusements usually appropriated to the capital; those which it has in common with the country shall be first enumerated, though in a more superficial way.

Of these, *card-playing* seems to have been as universal in the days of Elizabeth, as in modern times, and carried on, too, with the same ruinous consequences to property and morals; for though Stowe tells us, when commemorating the customs of London, that "from All-Hallows eve to the day following Candlemas-day, there was, among other sports, playing at cards for counters, nails, and points, in every house, more for pastime than for gain," yet we learn from contemporary satirists, from Gosson, Stubbes, and Northbrooke*, that all ranks, and especially the upper classes, were incurably addicted to gaming in the pursuit of this amusement, which they considered equally as seductive and pernicious as dice.

The games at cards peculiar to this period, and now obsolete, are, 1. *Primero*, supposed to be the most ancient game of cards in England. It was very fashionable in the age of Shakspeare, who represents Henry the Eighth playing "at *primero* with the duke of Suffolk †;" and Falstaff exclaiming in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, "I never prospered since I foreswore myself at *primero*." ‡

The mode of playing this curious game is thus described by Mr. Strutt, from Mr. Barrington's papers upon card-playing, in the eighth volume of the *Archæologia*:—"Each player had four cards dealt to him one by one, the seven was the highest card in point of number that he could avail himself of, which counted for twenty-one, the six counted for sixteen, the five for fifteen, and the ace for the same, but the two, the three, and the four, for their respective points only. The knave of hearts was commonly fixed upon for the *quinola*, which the

* "Schoole of Abuse," "Anatomie of Abuses," and "Treatise againt Diceing, Card-playing," &c.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 170. Act v. sc. 1.

‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 186, 187. Act iv. sc. 5.

player might make what card or suit he thought proper; if the cards were of different suits, the highest number won the primero, if they were all of one colour he that held them won the flush." *

2. *Trump*, nearly coeval in point of antiquity with primero, and introduced in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, a comedy, first acted in 1561, where Dame Chat, addressing Diccon, says, —

"We be fast set at trump, man, hard by the fyre;" †

and we learn from Decker that, in 1612, it was much in vogue: — "To speake," he remarks, "of all the sleights used by card-players in all sorts of games would but weary you that are to read, and bee but a thanklesse and unpleasing labour for me to set them down. Omitting, therefore the deceipts practised (even in the fayrest and most civill companies) at Primero, Saint Maw, *Trump*, and such like games, I will, &c." ‡

3. *Gleek*. This game is alluded to twice by Shakspeare §; and from a passage in Cook's *Green's Tu Quoque*, appears to have been held in much esteem: —

"*Scat.* Come, gentlemen, what is your game?
Staines. Why, *gleek*; *that's your only game*;" ||

it is then proposed to play either at twelve-penny gleek, or crown gleek. ¶

To these may be added, *Gresco*, *Mount Saint*, *New Cut*, *Knave Out of Doors*, and *Ruff*, all of which are mentioned in old plays, and were favourites among our ancestors. '

* Strutt's Sports and Pastimes, 4to. 1810, p. 291, 292.

† Ancient British Drama, vol. i. p. 111. col. 1.

‡ Belman of London, sig. F 2.

§ Midsummer Night's Dream, act iii. sc. 1. Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 401. Romeo and Juliet, act iv. sc. 5. Reed's Shakspeare vol. xx. p. 221.

|| Ancient British Drama, vol. ii. p. 551. col. 1.

¶ In the Compleat Gamester, 2nd edit. 1676, p. 90., may be found the mode of playing this game.

' The first of these games is mentioned in *Eastward Hoe*, printed in 1605, and written by Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston; the second in the *Dumb Knight*,

Tables and Dice, enumerated by Burton after cards, include some games unknown to the present day; such as *tray-trip*, *mum-chance*, *philosopher's game*, *novum*, &c.; the first is noticed by Shakspeare in *Twelfth Night*, and appears, from a note by Mr. Tyrwhitt, to have been a species of *draughts* *; the second was also a game at tables, and is coupled by Ben Jonson in the *Alchemist* with *tray-trip* †; the third is mentioned by Burton ‡, and is described by Mr. Strutt from a manuscript in the British Museum. — “It is called,” says the author, “‘a number fight,’ because in it men fight and strive together by the art of counting or numbering how one may take his adversary’s king and erect a triumph upon the deficiency of his calculations §;” and the fourth is introduced by Shakspeare in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* ||; — “it was properly called *novum quinque*,” remarks Mr. Douce, “from the two principal throws of the dice, nine and five; — was called in French *quinque-nove*, and is said to have been invented in Flanders.” ¶

The immoralities to which *dice* have given birth, we are authorised in considering, from the proverbial phraseology of Shakspeare, to have been as numerous in his time as at present. The expressions “false as dice,” and “false as dicers’ oaths,” will be illustrated by the following anecdote, taken from an anonymous MS. of the reign of James the First: — “Sir William Herbert, playing at dice with another gentleman, there rose some questions about a cast. Sir William’s antagonist declared it was a four and a five; he as positively insisted that it was a five and a six; the other then swore with a bitter im-

the production of Lewis Machin, 1608; the third in *A Woman killed with Kindness*, written by Thomas Heywood, 1617, where are also noticed *Lodam*, *Noddy*, *Post and Pair*, a species of Brag, *Knave out of Doors*, and *Ruff*, this last being something like Whist, and played in four different ways, under the names of *English Ruff*, *French Ruff*, *Double Ruff*, and *Wide Ruff*. — Vide *Ancient British Drama*, vol. ii. p. 444, 445.

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 335. note.

† Works of Ben Jonson; act v. sc. 4.

‡ Anatomy of Melancholy, p. 172. col. 2.

§ Sports and Pastimes, 4to. p. 277.

|| Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 183. Act v. sc. 2.

¶ Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 243.

¹ Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. ix. pp. 227, 228. Winter’s Tale, act i. sc. 2.

² Ibid. vol. xviii. p. 240. Hamlet, act iii. sc. 4.

precation, that it was as he had said ; Sir William then replied, ‘Thou art a perjured knave ; for give me a sixpence, and if there be a four upon the dice, I will return you a thousand pounds ;’ at which the other was presently abashed, for indeed the dice were false, and of a high cut, without a four.” *

Dancing was an almost daily amusement in the court of Elizabeth ; the Queen was peculiarly fond of this exercise, as had been her father Henry the Eighth, and the taste for it became so general, during her reign, that a great part of the leisure of almost every class of society was spent, and especially on days of festivity, in dancing.

To dance elegantly was one of the strongest recommendations to the favour of Her Majesty ; and her courtiers, therefore, strove to rival each other in this pleasing accomplishment ; nor were their efforts, in many instances, unrewarded. Sir Christopher Hatton, we are told, owed his promotion, in a great measure, to his skill in dancing ; and in accordance with this anecdote, Gray opens his “ Long Story” with an admirable description of his merit in this department, which, as containing a most just and excellent picture, both of the architecture and manners of “ the days of good Queen Bess,” as well as of the dress and agility of the knight, we with pleasure transcribe. Stoke-Pogeis, the scene of the narrative, was formerly in the possession of the Hattons ; —

“ In Britain’s isle, no matter where,
An ancient pile of building stands ;
The Huntingdons and Hattons there
Employ’d the pow’r of Fairy hands

To raise the cieling’s fretted height,
Each pannel in achievements clothing,
Rich windows that exclude the light,
And passages that lead to nothing.

Full oft within the spacious walls,
When he had fifty winters o’er him,

* Strutt’s Sports and Pastimes, p. 272.

My grave Lord-Keeper led the *brawls* ;
The seal and maces danc'd before him.

His bushy beard and shoe-strings green,
His high-crown'd hat and sattin doublet,
Mov'd the stout heart of England's Queen,
Tho' Pope and Spaniard could not trouble it."

The *Brawl*, a species of dance, here alluded to, is derived from the French word *braule*, "indicating," observes Mr. Douce, "a shaking or swinging motion. — It was performed by several persons uniting hands in a circle, and giving each other continual shakes, the steps changing with the tune. It usually consisted of three *pas* and a *pied-joint*, to the time of four strokes of the bow ; which, being repeated, was termed a *double brawl*. With this dance, balls were usually opened." *

Shakspeare seems to have entertained as high an idea of the efficacy of a *French brawl*, as probably did Sir Christopher Hatton, when he exhibited before Queen Elizabeth ; for he makes Moth in *Love's Labour's Lost* ask Armado, — "Master, will you win your love with a *French brawl* ?" and he then exclaims, "These betray nice wenches." † That several dances were included under the term *brawls*, appears from a passage in Shelton's *Don Quixote* : — "After this there came in another artificial dance, of those called *Brawles* ‡ ;" and Mr. Douce informs us, that amidst a great variety of *brawls*, noticed in Thoinot Arbeau's treatise in dancing, entitled *Orchesographie*, occurs a *Scotish brawl* ; and he adds that this dance continued in fashion to the close of the seventeenth century. §

Another dance of much celebrity at this period, was the *Pavin* or *Pavan*, which, from the solemnity of its measure, seems to have been held in utter aversion by Sir Toby Belch, who, in reference to his intoxicated surgeon, exclaims, — "Then he's a rogue. After a passy-

* Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 217.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 52. Act iii. sc. 1.

‡ Part II. p. 129.

§ Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. pp. 219, 220.

measure, or a pavin, I hate a drunken rogue." * This is the text of Mr. Tyrwhitt; but the old copy reads, — "Then he's a rogue, and a *passy measure's pavyn*," which is probably correct; for the *pavan* was rendered still more grave by the introduction of the *passamezzo* air, which obliged the dancers, after making several steps round the room, to *cross it in the middle* in a *slow step* or cinque pace. This alteration of time occasioned the term *passamezzo* to be prefixed to the name of several dances; thus we read of the *passamezzo galliard*, as well as the *passamezzo pavan*; and Sir Toby, by applying the latter appellation to his surgeon, meant to call him, not only a rogue, but a solemn coxcomb. "The *pavan*, from *pavo* a peacock," observes Sir J. Hawkins, "is a grave and majestick dance. The method of dancing it was anciently by gentlemen dressed with a cap and sword, by those of the long robe in their gowns, by princes in their mantles, and by ladies in gowns with long trains, the motion whereof in the dance resembled that of a peacock's tail. This dance is supposed to have been invented by the Spaniards, and its figure is given with the characters for the step, in the *Orchesographia* of Thoinot Arbeau. — Of the *passamezzo* little is to be said, except that it was a favourite air in the days of Queen Elizabeth. Ligon, in his *History of Barbadoes*, mentions a *passamezzo galliard*, which, in the year 1647, a Padre in that island played to him on the lute; the very same, he says, with an air of that kind which in Shakspeare's play of *Henry the Fourth* was originally played to Sir John Falstaff and Doll Tearsheet, by Sneak, the musician, there named." †

Of equal gravity with the "doleful pavin," as Sir W. D'Avenant calls it, was *The Measure*, to *tread* which was the relaxation of the most dignified characters in the state, and formed a part of the revelry of the inns of court, where the gravest lawyers were often found *treading the measures*. Shakspeare puns upon the name of this dance, and contrasts it with the Scotch jig, in *Much Ado about Nothing*,

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 406.

† Ibid. vol. v. p. 407. note.

where he introduces Beatrice telling her cousin Hero, — “ The fault will be in the musick, cousin, if you be not woo’d in good time: if the prince be too important, tell him, there is *measure* in every thing, and so *dance out* the answer. For hear me, Hero: Wooing, wedding, and repenting, is as a Scotch jig, a *measure*, and a cinque-pace: the first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical: the wedding, mannerly-modest, as a *measure full of state and ancientry*; and then comes repentance, and, with his bad legs, falls into the cinque-pace faster and faster, till he sink into his grave.” *

A more brisk and lively step accompanied the *Canary dance*, which was, likewise, very fashionable: — “ I have seen a medicine,” says Lafeu in *All’s Well that Ends Well*, alluding to the influence of female charms, —

“ That’s able to breathe life into a stone;
Quicken a rock, and *make you dance canary*,
With *spritely fire and motion* ;” †

and Moth advises Armado, when dancing the brawl, to *Canary it* with his feet. ‡

The mode of performing this dance, is thus given by Mr. Douce, from the treatise of Thoinot Arbeau: — “ A lady is taken out by a gentleman, and after dancing together to the cadences of the proper air, he leads her to the end of the hall; this done he retreats back to the original spot, always looking at the lady. Then he makes up to her again, with certain steps, and retreats as before. His partner performs the same ceremony, which is several times repeated by both parties, with various strange fantastic steps, very much in the savage style.” §

Beside the *brawl*, the *pavan*, the *measure*, and the *canary*, several other dances were in vogue, under the general titles of *coranto*es,

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. vi. pp. 38, 39.

† Ibid. vol. viii. p. 260, 261.

‡ Ibid. vol. vii. p. 52.

§ Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 221.

lavollos, jigs, galliards, and fancies, but the four which we have selected for more peculiar notice, appear to have been the most celebrated.

It is a melancholy proof of the imperfect state of civilisation during the reign of Elizabeth, that the barbarous sport of *Bear and Bullbeating* should have been as favourite a diversion of the court, nobility, and gentry, as of the lowest class of society. Indeed it would appear, from an order issued by the privy council, in July, 1591, that the populace had earlier than their superiors become tired of this cruel spectacle, and had given a marked preference to the amusements of the stage; for it is enacted in the above order, that there should be no plays publicly exhibited on *Thursdays*; because on *Thursdays*, *bear-baiting* and such like pastimes had been *usually* practised; and four days afterwards an injunction to the same effect was sent to the Lord Mayor, in which, after justly reprobating the performance of plays on the Sabbath, it is added, that on "all other days of the week in divers place the players do use to recite their plays to the *great hurt and destruction of the game of bear-baiting, and like pastimes, which are maintained for her Majesty's pleasure.*" *

History informs us that Elizabeth's pleasure was thus gratified at an early period of her life, and continued to be so to the close of her reign. When confined at Hatfield house, she, and her sister, Queen Mary, were recreated with a grand exhibition of bear-baiting, "*with which their highnesses were right well content.*" † Soon after she had ascended the throne, she entertained the French ambassadors with bear and bull baiting, and stood a spectatress of the amusement until six in the evening; a similar exhibition took place the next day at Paris-Garden, for the same party; and even twenty-seven years posterior, Her Majesty could not devise a more welcome gratification for the Danish ambassador, than the display of such a spectacle at Greenwich.

* Chalmers's Apology, p. 380.

† Warton's Life of Sir Tho. Pope, sect. iii. p. 85.

So decided a partiality for this savage pastime would, of course, induce her courtiers to take care that their mistress should not be disappointed in this respect, and more especially when she honoured them with one of her periodical visits. Accordingly Laneham tells us, that when she was at Kenelworth Castle, in 1575, not less than thirteen bears were provided for her diversion, and that these were baited with a large species of ban-dogs. *

An example thus set by royalty itself, soon spread through every rank, and bear and bull baiting became one of the most general amusements in England. Shakspeare has alluded to it in more than twenty places, and it has equally attracted the notice of the foreign and domestic historian. Hentzner, whose *Itinerary* was printed in Latin A. D. 1598, was a spectator at one of these exhibitions, which he describes in the following manner: speaking of the theatres he says, "there is still another place, built in the form of a theatre, which serves for the baiting of bulls and bears; they are fastened behind, and then worried by great English bull-dogs, but not without great risque to the dogs, from the horns of the one, and the teeth of the other; and it sometimes happens they are killed on the spot; fresh ones are immediately supplied in the places of those that are wounded or tired." He then adds an account of a still more inhuman pastime: — "To this entertainment, there often follows that of whipping a blinded bear, which is performed by five or six men, standing circularly with whips, which they exercise upon him without any mercy, as he cannot escape from them because of his chain; he defends himself with all his force and skill, throwing down all who come within his reach, and are not active enough to get out of it, and tearing the whips out of their hands, and breaking them." † Stowe, in the edition of his *Survey* printed in 1618, remarks, that "as for the bayting of Bulles and Beares, they are till this day much frequented, namely, in Beare-gardens on the Bankside, wherein be prepared Scaffolds for beholders to stand upon." ‡

* Nichols's *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, vol. i. p. 249.

† Hentzner's *Travels*, pp. 29, 30.

‡ P. 147.

The admission to these gardens was upon easy terms, for we are told that the spectators paid "one pennie at the gate, another at the entrie of the scaffold, and a third for quiet standing." * It was usual also for the bearward to parade the streets with his animal, who had frequently a monkey on his back and was preceded by a minstrel. The bear was generally complimented with the name of his keeper: thus, in Shakspeare's time, there was a celebrated one at Paris Garden called *Sackerson*. "I have seen Sackerson loose," says Slender, "twenty times; and have taken him by the chain: but, I warrant you, the women have so cried and shriek'd at it, that it pass'd:—but women, indeed, cannot abide 'em; they are very ill-favoured rough things†;" in the "Puritan" published in 1607, occurs one named *George Stone*; and in the "Humorous Lovers," by the Duke of Newcastle, printed in 1617, *Tom of Lincoln* is the appellation of another.

A diversion infinitely more elegant and pleasing in all its accompaniments, once of great utility, and unattended with the smallest vestige of barbarism or inhumanity, we have now to record as resulting from the use of the long bow, which, though greatly on the decline, in the days of Elizabeth, as a weapon of warfare, still lingered amongst us as a species of amusement. Various attempts, indeed, had been made by the nearly immediate predecessors of Elizabeth, to revive the use of the long bow as a military weapon; but with very partial success:—"the most famous, prudent, politike and grave prince K. Henry the 7," says Robinson, "was the first Phenix in chusing out a number of chiefe Archers to give daily attendance upon his person, whom he named his Garde. But the high and mighty renowned prince his son, K. H. 8. (ann. 1509) not onely with great prowes and praise proceeded in that which his father had begon; but also added greater dignity unto the same, like a most roial renowned David, enacting a good and godly statute

* Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent*, 1570, p. 248.

† Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. v. pp. 33, 34. *M. W. of Windsor*, act i. sc. 1.

(ann. 33 H. 8. cap. 9.) for the use and exercise of shooting in every degree. And further more for the maintenance of the same laudable exercise in this honourable city of London by his gracious charter confirmed unto the worshipful citizens of the same, this your now famous order of Knightes of Prince Arthure's Round Table or Society: like as in his life time when he saw a good Archer indeede, he chose him and ordained such a one for a knight of the same order." *

To this "Auncient Order, Societie, and Unitie Laudable, of Prince Arthure," as it was termed, and to which Shakspeare alludes, under the character of Justice Shallow, in the second part of *King Henry the Fourth* †, Archery owed, for some time, considerable support; but ultimately, it contributed to hasten its decline. Under the auspices of Prince Arthur, eldest son of King Henry VII., and who was so expert a bowman, that every skilful shooter was complimented with his name, the society flourished abundantly; its captain being honoured with his title, and the other members being termed his knights. His brother Henry was equally attached to the art, but unfortunately, having appointed a splendid match at shooting with the long bow, at Windsor, an inhabitant of Shoreditch, London, joining the archers, exhibited such extraordinary skill, that the King, delighted with his performance, humorously gave him the title of Duke of Shoreditch, an appellation which not only superseded the former title, but, being copied by the inferior members, in assuming the rank of Marquis, Earl, &c., threw such a degree of burlesque and ridicule over the business, as finally brought contempt upon the art itself.

The Society, however, still subsisted with much magnificence

* "The Auncient Order, Societie, and Vnitie Laudable, of Prince Arthure, and his knightly Armoury of the Round Table. With a Threefold Assertion frendly in favour and furtherance of English Archery at this day. Translated and Collected by R. R." (Richard Robinson) 4to. 1583.—Vide *British Bibliographer*, vol. i. p. 125. 127.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xii. p. 144.

during the reign of Elizabeth ; and in the very year that Robinson published his book in support of Archery, namely, in 1583, " a grand shooting match was held in London, and the captain of the archers assuming his title of Duke of Shoreditch, summoned a suit of nominal nobility, under the titles of Marquis of Barlo, of Clerkenwell, of Islington, of Hoxton, of Shacklewell, and Earl of Pancrass, &c., and these meeting together at the appointed time, with their different companies, proceeded in a pompous march from Merchant Taylors' Hall, consisting of three thousand archers, sumptuously apparelled ; nine hundred and forty-two of them having chains of gold about their necks. This splendid company was guarded by four thousand whiffers and billmen, besides pages and footmen. They passed through Broad-street, the residence of their captain, and thence into Moorfields, by Finsbury, and so on to Smithfield, where having performed several evolutions, they shot at a target for honour." *

Notwithstanding this brilliant celebration, it appears that, thirteen years afterwards, the disuse of archery was so general, that the " Companies of Bowyers and Fletchers" made heavy complaints, and procured a work to be written, in order to place before " the nobility and gentlemen of England," their distress, and deprivation of subsistence, from the neglect of the bow. The work is entitled, " A briefe Treatise, To proove the necessitie and excellence of the Vse of Archerie. Abstracted out of ancient and moderne writers, by R. S. Perused and allowed by Authoritie." 4to. 1596. This was one of the last attempts to revive the bow as a weapon of defence, and it records a contemporary and successful effort to repel cavalry by its adoption on the part of a rebel force.

* Strutt's Sports and Pastimes, p. 62., from Strype's London, vol. i. p. 250. — In 1682, appeared " A remembrance of the worthy show and shooting by the Duke of Shoreditch and his associates the worshipful citizens of London, upon Tuesday the 17th of September 1583, set forth according to the truth thereof, to the everlasting honour of the game of shooting in the long bow. B.W. M."

"About Bartholomew tyde last, 1595," relates the author, "there came out of Scotland one James Forgeson, bowyer to the King of Scots, who credibly reported, that about two years past, certaine rebelles did rise there against the King, who sent against them five hundred horsemen well appointed. They meeting three hundred of the rebel's bowmen, encountered each with other, when the bowemen slue two hundred and fourscore of their horses, and killed, wounded, and sore hurt most part of the King's men. Whereupon the said Forgeson was sent hether from the King with commission to buy up ten thousande bowes and bowstaves: but because he could not speed heer, he went over into the East countries for them." *

The *Toxophilus* of Ascham, first published in 1544, was written in order "that stil, according to the olde wont of Englande, youth should use it for the *most honest pastime in peace*, that men might handle it as a *most sure weapon in warre*." † The latter of these purposes so completely failed, that the use of the bow as an offensive or defensive weapon of warfare totally ceased in the time of James the First; but the former was partially gained, as the treatise of Ascham certainly contributed to prolong the reign of archery as a mere recreation, though it could not retrieve its character as an instrument for the destruction of game. So early, indeed, as 1531, we learn from Sir Thomas Elyot's "*Boke named the Governour*," that crossbows and guns had then superseded the long-bow, in the sports of the field:—"Verylye I suppose," says he, "that before crosbowes and handegunnes were broughte into this realme, by the sleighte of our enemies, to the entent to distroye the noble defence of archerye, continuall use of shootynge in the longe bowe made the feate soo perfecte and exacte among englyshemen, that thei than as surely and soone kyllled suche game whiche thei lysted to have, as thei nowe can do with the crossebowe or gunne." ‡

* Vide *British Bibliographer*, vol. i. pp. 448, 450.

† Ascham's *Works* apud Bennet, 4to. p. 55.

‡ The *Boke named the Governour*; the edition of 1553, p. 83.

The cross-bow was the fashionable instrument for killing game, even with the ladies, in the days of Elizabeth; the Queen was peculiarly fond of the sport, and her example was eagerly followed by the female part of her court. Shakspeare represents the Princess and her ladies, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, thus employed*; and Mr. Lodge informs us, through the medium of a letter, written by Sir Francis Leake in 1605, that the Countess of Shrewsbury, and the ladies of the Cavendish family, were ardently attached to this diversion. †

That the *honest pastime* of shooting with the long bow was often commuted, in the capital, for amusements of a much less innocent nature, we learn from Stowe, who attributes the decline of archery, as a diversion, to the enclosure of common grounds in the vicinity of the metropolis:—"What should I speake," says he, "of the ancient daily exercises in the long Bow by citizens of this citie, now almoste cleane left off and forsaken: I over passe it: for by the meanes of closing in of common grounds, our Archers for want of roome to shoote abroad, creep into bowling allies, and ordinarie dicing-houses neerer home, where they have roome enough to hazard their money at unlawfull games." ‡

Among the amusements more peculiarly belonging to the metropolis, and which better than any other exhibits the fashionable mode, at that time, of disposing of the day, we may enumerate the custom of publicly parading in the middle isle of St. Paul's Cathedral. During the reign of Elizabeth and James, *Paul's Walk*, as it was called, was daily frequented by the nobility, gentry, and professional men; here, from ten to twelve in the forenoon, and from three to six in the afternoon, they met to converse on business, politics, or pleasure; and hither too, in order to acquire fashions, form assignations for the gaming table, or shun the grasp of the bailiff, came the gallant, the gamester, and the debtor, the stale knight, and the cap-

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 71. Act iv. sc. 1.

† Lodge's Illustrations of British History, vol. iii. p. 295.

‡ Stowe's Survey of London, 4to. 1618. p. 162.

tain out of service ; and here it was that Falstaff purchased Bardolph ; “ I bought him,” says the jolly knight, “ at Paul’s.” *

Of the various purposes for which this temple was frequented by the loungers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Decker has left us a most entertaining account, and from his tract on this subject, published in 1609, we shall extract a few passages which throw no incurious light on the follies and dissipation of the age.

The supposed tomb of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, but in reality that of Guy Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, appears to have been a privileged part of the Cathedral : — “ The Duke’s tomb,” observes Decker, addressing the gallant, “ is a sanctuary ; and will keep you alive from worms, and land rats, that long to be feeding on your carcass : there you may spend your legs in winter a whole afternoon ; converse, plot, laugh, and talk any thing ; jest at your creditor, even to his face ; and in the evening, even by lamp-light, steal out ; and so cozen a whole covey of abominable catch-polls.” †

Such was the resort of the male fashionable world to this venerable Gothic pile, that it was customary for trades-people to frequent its aisles for the purpose of collecting the dresses of the day. “ If you determine to enter into a new suit, warn your tailor to attend you in Pauls, who, with his hat in his hand, shall like a spy discover the stuff, colour, and fashion of any doublet or hose that dare be seen there, and, stepping behind a pillar to fill his table books with those notes, will presently send you into the world an accomplished man ; by which means you shall wear your clothes in print with the first edition.” ‡

The author even condescends to instruct his beau, when he has obtained his suit, how best to exhibit it in St. Paul’s, and concludes by pointing out other recourses for killing time, on withdrawing from the cathedral. “ Bend your course directly in the middle line, that

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xii. p. 29. Henry IV. Part ii. act i. sc. 2.

† The Gull’s Horn-book, 4to. 1609. Reprint of 1812, p. 99.

‡ Ibid. pp. 101, 102.

the whole body of the church may appear to be yours ; where, in view of all, you may publish your suit in what manner you affect most, either with the slide of your cloak from the one shoulder : and then you must, as 'twere in anger, suddenly snatch at the middle of the inside, if it be taffeta at the least ; and so by that means your costly lining is betrayed, or else by the pretty advantage of compliment. But one note by the way do I especially woo you to, the neglect of which makes many of our gallants cheap and ordinary, that by no means you be seen above four turns ; but in the fifth make yourself away, either in some of the semsters' shops, the new tobacco-office, or amongst the booksellers, where, if you cannot read, exercise your smoke, and inquire who has writ against this divine weed, &c."*

After dinner it was necessary that the finished coxcomb should return to Paul's in a new dress : — " After dinner you may appear again, having translated yourself out of your English cloth into a light Turkey grogram, if you have that happiness of shifting ; and then be seen, for a turn or two, to correct your teeth with some quill or silver instrument, and to cleanse your gums with a wrought handkerchief : it skills not whether you dined, or no ; that is best known to your stomach ; or in what place you dined ; though it were with cheese, of your own mother's making, in your chamber or study." †

The fopperies exhibited in a place, which ought to have been closed against such unhallowed inmates, rival, if not exceed, all that modern puppyism can produce. The directions which Decker gives to his gallant on quitting St. Paul's in the forenoon, clearly prove, that the loungers of Shakspeare's time are not surpassed, either in affectation or the assumption of petty consequence, by the same worthless class of the nineteenth century : — " in which departure," enjoins the satirist, " if by chance you either encounter, or aloof off

* Gull's Horn-book, pp. 95, 96.

† Ibid. pp. 97, 98.

throw your inquisitive eye upon any knight or squire, being your familiar, salute him not by his name of Sir such a one, or so; but call him Ned, or Jack, &c. This will set off your estimation with great men: and if, though there be a dozen companies between you, 'tis the better, he call aloud to you, for that is most genteel, to know where he shall find you at two o'clock; tell him at such an ordinary, or such; and be sure to name those that are dearest, and whither none but your gallants resort." *

A still more offensive mode of displaying this ostentatious folly, sprang from a custom then general, and even now not altogether obsolete, of demanding *spur-money* from any person entering the cathedral during divine service, with spurs on. This was done by the younger choristers, and, it seems, frequently gave birth to the following gross violation of decency: "Never be seen to mount the steps into the quire, but upon a high festival day, to prefer the fashion of your doublet; and especially if the singing-boys seem to take note of you; for they are able to buzz your praises above their anthems, if their voices have not lost their maiden heads: but be sure your silver spurs dog your heels, and then the boys will swarm about you like so many white butterflies †; when you in the open quire shall draw forth a perfumed embroidered purse, the glorious sight of which will entice many countrymen from their devotion to wondering: and quoit silver into the boy's hands, that it may be heard above the first lesson, although it be read in a voice as big as one of the great organs." ‡

The tract from which we have taken these curious illustrations, contains also a passage which serves to show, that London, in the time of our poet, was not unprovided with exhibitions of the docility, sagacity, and tricks of animals; and this, with similar relations, will tend to prove, that the ingenious Mr. Astley, and the Preceptor of

* Gull's Horn-book, p. 97.

† They are thus called, from wearing *white surplices*.

‡ Gull's Horn-book, pp. 99, 100.

the learned pig, had been anticipated both in skill and perseverance. Decker, after conducting his "mere country gentleman" to the top of St. Paul's, proceeds thus:—"Hence you may descend, to talk about the *horse* that went up; and strive, if you can, to know his keeper; take the day of the month, and the number of the steps; and suffer yourself to believe verily that it was not a horse, but something else in the likeness of one: which wonders you may publish, when you return into the country, to the great amazement of all farmer's daughters, that will almost swoon at the report, and never recover till their bans be asked twice in the church." *

This is the *dancing-horse* alluded to by Shakspeare, in *Love's Labour's Lost* †; an English bay gelding, fourteen years old, and named *Morocco*. He had been taught by one Banks, a Scotchman, and their fame was spread over a great part of Europe; "if Banks had lived in older times," remarks Sir Walter Raleigh, "he would have shamed all the inchanters in the world: for whosoever was most famous among them, could never master, or instruct any beast as he did." ‡ It was the misfortune, indeed, of this man and his horse to be taken for enchanter; while at Paris, they had a narrow escape, being imprisoned for dealing with the devil, and at length liberated, on the magistrates discovering that the whole was merely the effect of human art §; but at Rome they fell a sacrifice to the more rivetted superstitions of the people, and were both burnt as magicians; a fate to which Ben Jonson adverts in the following lines:—

"But amongst those Tiberts, who do you think there was?
Old *Bankes* the juggler, our Pythagoras,
Grave tutor to the learned horse. Both which,
Being, beyond sea, burned for one witch,
Their spirits transmigrated to a cat." ||

* Gull's Horn-book, pp. 104, 105.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 26. Act i. sc. 2.

‡ History of the World, First Part, p. 178.

§ Vide Douce's Illustrations, vol. i. pp. 213, 214.

|| Ben Jonson's Works, fol. edit. 1640. Epigrammes, p. 46.

Nor were the feats of this sagacious horse unrivalled by the wonderful acquirements of other animals. The praise of *Morocco* is frequently combined by the poets and satirists of the age, with an account of the extraordinary tricks of his contemporary brutes : thus John Taylor, the water-poet, places Holden's camel on a level with Banks's horse :—

“ Old Holden's *camel*, or fine Bankes his *cut* ;”

and Bishop Hall, in his satires, brings us acquainted with a sagacious elephant, to which he kindly adds a couple of wonders of a different description ; a *bullock with two tails*, and a *fiddling friar*. He is describing the metamorphosis which London had produced in the person and manners of a young farmer, and adds,

“ The tenants wonder at their landlord's sonne,
And blesse them at so sudden coming on,
More than who vies his pence to view some trick
Of strange *Marocco's* dumb arithmetick,
Of the young *elephant*, or *two-tayl'd steere*,
Or the rigg'd camel, or the *fiddling frere*.” *

The catalogue of wonders, monsters, and tricks, may be augmented by a reference to Ben Jonson, who, in his *Bartholomew Fair*, among other spectacles, speaks of a *Bull with five legs and two pizzles*, *Dogs dancing the morrice*, and a *Hare beating the Tabor*. †

But of all the amusements which distinguish the age of Shakspeare, none could vie in richness, splendour, or invention, with the costly spectacles, called MASQUES, and PAGEANTS. The frequency of these exhibitions during the reigns of Elizabeth and James is astonishing, if we consider the immense expense which was lavished on their production ; the most celebrated poets and the most skilful artists often assisted in their formation ; nor was it uncommon to behold nobility,

* Chalmers's English Poets, vol. v. p. 274. col. 2. Satires, book iv. sat. 2.

† Works of Ben Jonson ; act v. sc. 4.

or even royalty itself, assuming the part of actors in these romantic entertainments.

What a gorgeous and voluptuous court could effect, in seconding the efforts of consummate skill, through the medium of machinery, decoration, and dress, may be collected from the numerous Masques of Ben Jonson, who seems to feel the inadequacy of language to express the beauty, grandeur, and sumptuousness of the devices employed on these occasions. Thus, in his *Hymenæi, or the Solemnities of Masque and Barriers at a Marriage*, he manifestly labours to paint the scene, and, at length, professes himself unequal to the task of conveying the impressions which it had made upon him. "Hitherto," says he, "extended the first night's solemnity, whose grace in the execution left not where to add to it, with wishing: I mean (nor do I court them) in those, that sustained the nobler parts. Such was the exquisite performance, as (beside the pomp, splendor, or what we may call apparelling of such presentments), that alone (had all else been absent) was of power to surprise with delight, and steal away the spectators from themselves. Nor was there wanting whatsoever might give to the furniture or complement; either in riches, or strangeness of the habits, delicacy of dances, magnificence of the scene, or divine rapture of musick. Only the envy was, that it lasted not still; or, (now it is past) cannot by imagination, much less description, be recovered to a part of that spirit it had in the gliding by." *

* The Workes of Benjamin Jonson, folio. 1640, Masques, p. 143. — Of the costly magnificence of this spectacle, an idea may be formed from that part which relates to the attire of the actors: "that of the Lords," describes the poet, "had part of it taken from the antique Greek statue; mixed with some moderne additions: which made it both gracefull, and strange. On their heads they wore Persick crowns that were with scroles of gold-plate turned outward, and wreathed about with a carnation and silver net-lawne; the one end of which hung carelessly on the left shoulder; the other was tricked up before, in severall degrees of folds, between the plates, and set with rich jewels, and great pearles. Their bodies were of carnation cloth of silver, richly wrought, and cut to expresse the naked, in manner of the Greek Thorax; girt under the breasts with a broad belt of cloth of gold imbroydered, and fastened before with jewels: Their Labels were of white cloth of silver, laced, and wrought curiously between, sutable to the upper halfe of their sleeves; whose nether parts with their bases, were of watchet cloth of silver, chev'ron'd all over with

Nothing, indeed, shows the romantic disposition of Elizabeth, and, indeed, of her times, more evidently than the Triumph, as it was called, devised and performed with great solemnity, in honour of the French commissioners for the Queen's marriage with the Duke of Anjou, in 1581. The contrivance was for four of her principal courtiers, under the quaint appellation of "four foster-children of Desire," to besiege and carry, by dint of arms, "The Fortress of Beauty;" intending, by this courtly ænigma, nothing less than the Queen's Majesty's own person. The actors in this famous triumph were, the *Earl of Arundel*, the *Lord Windsor*, *Master Philip Sidney*, and *Master Fulk Grevil*. And the whole was conducted so entirely in the spirit and language of knight-errantry, that nothing in the Arcadia itself is more romantic.*

The example of the court was followed with equal profusion by the citizens, and various corporate bodies of the capital, who contended with each other in the cost bestowed on these performances. In 1604, when King James and his Queen passed triumphantly from the Tower to Westminster, the citizens erected seven gates or arches, in different parts of the space through which the procession had to proceed. Over the first arch "was represented the true likeness of all the notable houses, *towers*, and *steeple*s, within the citie of London. — The sixth arche or gate of triumph was erected above the Conduit in Fleete-Streete, whereon the *Globe* of the world was seen to move, &c. At Temple-bar a seventh arche or gate was erected, the forefront whereof was proportioned in every respect like a *Temple*, being dedicated to Janus, &c. — The citie of Westminster, and dutchy of

lace. Their Mantils were of severall colour'd silkes, distinguishing their qualities as they were coupled in paires; the first, *skie colour*; the second, *pearle colour*; the third, *flame colour*; the fourth, *tawny*; and these cut in leaves, which were subtilly tack'd up, and imbroydered with Oo's, and between every ranck of leaves, a broad *silver lace*. They were fastened on the right shoulder, and fell compasse down the back in gracious folds, and were again tyed with a round knot, to the fastening of their swords. Upon their legs they wore *silver greaves*." P. 143.

* Nichols's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, vol. i. Preface, p. 10.

Lancaster, at the Strand, had erected the invention of a rainbow, the moone, sunne, and starres, advanced between two Pyramids." *

In 1612-13, the gentlemen of the inns of court presented a masque in honour of the marriage of the Elector Palatine of the Rhine, with the Princess Elizabeth, of which the poetry was the composition of Chapman, and the machinery the invention of Inigo Jones. The expense of this pageantry amounted, according to Dugdale †, to one thousand and eighty-six pounds eight shillings and eleven pence, and was conducted with uncommon splendour. "First rode," relates Howes, "fiftie choyce gentlemen richly attyred, and as gallantly mounted, with every one his footemen to attend him: These rode very stately like a vauntguard." Next to these appeared an *antique* or *mock-masque*. "After them came two chariots triumphal, very pleasant and full of state, wherein rode the choyce musitians of this kingdome, in robes like to the Virginian priests, with sundry devises, all pleasant and significant, with two rankes of torches: Then came the chiefe maskers with great State in white Indian habit, or like the great princes of Barbary, richly imbrodered with the golden sun, with suteable ornaments in all poynts, about their necks were rufs of feathers, spangled and beset with pearle and silver, and upon their heads lofty coronets suteable to the rest." ‡

Nor were these fanciful and ever varying pageants productive merely of amusement; they had higher aims, and more important effects, and, while ostensibly constructed for the purposes of compliment and entertainment, either indirectly inculcated some lesson of moral wisdom, or more immediately obtained their end, by impersonating the vices and the virtues, and exhibiting a species of ethic drama.

They had also the merit of conveying no inconsiderable fund of instruction from the stores of mythology, history, and philosophy.

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 137. note by Malone, from Stowe's Annals.

† Origines Juridiciales, folio, p. 346, edit. 1671.

‡ Stowe's Annales, by Howes, folio, p. 1006. edit. 1631.

Of this the masques of Jonson afford abundant proof, containing, as they do, not only the common superficial knowledge on these subjects, but displaying such a mass of recondite learning, illustrative of the manners, opinions, customs, and antiquities of the ancient world, as would serve to extend the information of the educated, while they delighted and instructed the body of the people.

To these *classical diversions*, these *cruditæ voluptates*, which were remarkably frequent during the whole era of Shakspeare's existence, we may confidently ascribe some portion of that intimacy with the records of history, the fictions of paganism, and the reveries of philosophy which our poet so copiously exhibits throughout his poems and plays, as well as no small accession to the wild and fantastic visionary forms that so pre-eminently delight us in the golden dreams of his imagination.

Among the numerous scenes and descriptions which owe their birth, in our author's dramas, to these superb combinations of mechanism and poesy, we shall select two passages that more peculiarly point out the manner in which he has availed himself of their scenery and arrangement.

"There is a passage in *Antony and Cleopatra*," observes Mr. Warton, "where the metaphor is exceedingly beautiful; but where the beauty both of the expression and the allusion is lost, unless we recollect the frequency and the nature of these shows (the Pageants) in Shakspeare's age. I must cite the whole of the context, for the sake of the last hemistick.

"*Ant.* Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish,
A vapour sometime, like a bear or lion;
A towred citadel, a pendant rock,
A forked mountain, or blue promontory
With trees upon't, that nod unto the world,
And mock our eyes with air: Thou hast seen these signs;
They are *Black Vesper's Pageants*." *

This illustrious critic, however, should have continued the quotation

* History of English Poetry, vol. ii. p. 365. note.

somewhat further; for the next three lines include a piece of imagery immediately taken from the same source, and more worthy of remark than any preceding allusion: —

“ *Eros.* Ay, my lord.

Ant. That, which is now a horse; even with a thought,
The *Rack dislimns*; and makes it indistinct,
As water is in water.” *

The meaning of the expression, “The Rack dislimns,” is clearly ascertained by a reference to Ben Jonson’s *Hymenæal Masque* already quoted, in which occurs the following striking passage: — “Here the upper part of the scene, which was all of clouds, and made artificially to swell and ride like the *Rack*, began to open, and the air clearing, in the top thereof was discovered Juno sitting in a throne, supported by two beautiful peacocks. — Round about her sate the spirits of the ayre, in several colours, making musique. Above her the region of fire, with a continual motion, was seen to whirl circularly, and Jupiter standing in the top (figuring the heaven) brandishing his thunder. Beneath her the rainbow Iris, and, on the two sides eight ladies, attired richly, and alike, in the most celestial colours, who represented her powers, as she is the Governess of Marriage.” †

This extract, also, together with the one given in a preceding page, descriptive of the *Citizen’s Pageant* in honour of James and his Queen, 1604, will throw a strong light on a celebrated passage in the *Tempest*, and fully prove our poet’s extensive obligations to these very ingenious devices: —

“ Our revels now are ended: These our actors,
As I foretold you, were *all spirits*, and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capt *towers*, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn *temples*, the great *globe* itself,

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xvii. pp. 235, 236. Act iv. sc. 12.

† The Workes of Benjamin Jonson, fol. 164. *Masques*, p. 135.

Yea all, which it inherit, shall dissolve;
 And, like this *insubstantial pageant* faded,
 Leave not a *rack* behind."*

The *towers*, the *temples*, and the *great globe itself* of these lines, we find exhibited in the pageant of 1604, eight or ten years anterior to the representation of this play; while in the masque of Jonson, we perceive the occasion of its performance to have been similar to that which gave origin to the *insubstantial pageant* of Prospero, both being *Hymenæal Masques*, both likewise including among their actors the characters of *Iris* and *Juno*, and both being accompanied by *spirits of the ayre making musick*.

Here the term *rack*, in both quotations from our poet, manifestly appears, from the passage in Ben Jonson's masque, to have been drawn from the machinery of the *pageant*, and to have implied *masses of clouds in motion*; the lines from *Antony and Cleopatra*, alluding to their mutability and endless diversity, and those in the *Tempest* importing their utter insignificance and instability when compared with the more durable materials of the *pageant*; and hence emphatically founding on their evanescence, a complete picture of entire dissolution, that, like the *insubstantial pageant* which had just vanished from their eyes, not only towers, palaces, temples, and the globe itself, should disappear, but even not the most trifling part of the fabric of the world, not even the passing clouds, the *fleeting rack*, should be left behind, as a memorial of existence.

Upon no occasions were these imposing spectacles, the *masque*, the *pageant*, and the *triumph*, gotten up with more gorgeous splendour, than during the PROGRESSES which Elizabeth so frequently made throughout the course of her long reign. Every nobleman's house was thrown open for her reception whilst thus engaged, and the keenest rivalry was excited amongst them, with regard to the expense, magnificence, variety, and duration of the entertainments which

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. pp. 135—137. Act iv. sc. 1.

they lavished upon her. Nor was the Queen at all scrupulous in accepting their invitations, for she considered this hospitality, however ruinous to the individual, as a necessary attention, and, in fact, entered the mansions of her courtiers with the same feelings of property, as when she sate down beneath the roof of what might more strictly be termed her own palaces. That her subjects were complaisant enough to acquiesce in this assumption, is evident from a passage in *Harrison's Description of England*, who mentioning the variety of the Queen's houses, adds,—“But what shall I need to take upon me to repeat all, and tell what houses the queen's majesty hath? Sith *all is hers*; and when it pleaseth hir in the summer season to recreate himself abroad, and view the state of the countie, and hear the complaints of hir unjust officers or substitutes, *every nobleman's house is hir palace*, where she continueth during pleasure, and till she returne again to some of hir owne.” One of the most striking proofs of the frequency and oppression of these royal visits, has been recorded by Mr. Nichols, who tells us, that she was *twelve* times at Theobald's, which was a very convenient distance from London. *Each visit cost Cecil two or three thousand pounds*; the Queen lying there *at his Lordships charge*, sometimes *three weeks, or a month, or six weeks together.*” *

These *Progresses*, however, of which Mr. Nichols has presented us with a most curious and ample collection, serve, more than any other documents which history could afford, to impress us with an accurate and interesting idea of the hospitality, diversions, costume, and domestic economy, of the great Baronial Chieftains of our last romantic reign. From them, observes their very ingenious editor, “much of the manners of the times may be learned. They give us a view into the interior of the noble families, display their state in house-keeping, and other articles, and set before our eyes their magnificent mansions long since gone to decay, or supplanted by others of the succeeding age.” †

* *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, vol. i. Preface, p. 19.

† *Ibid.* p. 24.

Perhaps the most splendid reception which Elizabeth met with, in the whole course of her Progresses, was at Kenelworth-castle, in Warwickshire, the seat of the once all-powerful Earl of Leicester. Some slight notice of this place, as having probably attracted the attention of young Shakspeare, during the visit of Her Majesty, has already been given in a former part of our work; but it will be necessary here, in order to impart a just conception of the costly entertainments which awaited the Queen on these excursions, to give a brief catalogue of the ten days "princely pleasures" of Kenelworth castle.

Her Majesty reached Lord Leicester's on Saturday, the ninth of July, 1575, and was greeted, on her approach to the castle, by a Sibyl, prophesying prosperity to her government. Six giants stood ready to receive her at the outer gate apparently blowing trumpets, which were in reality sounded by persons placed behind them, while the Porter, representing Hercules, addressed her in a metrical speech, "proclaiming open gates and free passage to all, and yielding to her on his knees, his club, keys, and office." Arriving at the base court, a female figure, appropriately dressed, "came all over the pool, being so conveyed, that it seemed she had gone upon the water; she was attended by two water-nymphs, and calling herself the Lady of the Lake," complimented Her Majesty, who, passing on to the inner court, crossed the bridge, which was ornamented with seven pillars on each side, exhibiting on their summits, birds in cages, fruits in silver bowls, corn in similar vessels, wine and grapes in silver pots, fishes in trays, weapons of war, and musical instruments, the respective gifts of Silvanus, Pomona, Ceres, Bacchus, Neptune, Mars, and Apollo. Then, preceded by a noble band of music, the Queen crossed the inner court, alighted from her horse, and entered her apartments.

On Sunday evening, she beheld *a grand display of fire-works*, a species of amusement which had been little known previous to her reign: "after a warning piece or two," says Laneham, "was a blaze of burning darts flying to and fro, beams of stars coruscant, streams

and hail of fire-sparks, lightnings of wild fire on the water; and on the land, flight and shot of thunder-bolts, all with such continuance, terror, and vehemence, the heavens thundered, the waters surged, and the earth shook."

Monday was occupied by *hunting*, conducted on a large and magnificent scale, during which Her Majesty was ingeniously complimented through the medium of several *sylvan devices*.

Music, dancing, and pageantry on the water, formed the diversions of the *Tuesday*.

Hunting and field sports consumed the *Wednesday*; *bear-baiting, tumbling, and fire-works*, were the recreations of the *Thursday*; and, the weather not permitting any out-door diversions on *Friday*, the time was spent in *banquetting, shows, and domestic games*.

On *Saturday*, the morning being fine, the Queen was highly entertained by the representation of a *country bride-ale*, by *running at the quintain*, and by the "Old Coventry Play of Hock Thursday;" while the evening diversions were a *regular play, a banquet, and a masque*.

The amusement of hunting was resumed on the *Monday*, returning from which Her Majesty was highly gratified by a *pageant on the water*, exhibiting, among other spectacles, Arion seated upon a dolphin twenty-four feet in length, and singing a song, accompanied by the music of six performers, who were snugly lodged in the belly of the fish.

The *Coventry play* not having been finished on the preceding Saturday, was repeated, at the desire of the Queen, on the *Tuesday*, and on *Wednesday* the 20th, she bade adieu to Kenelworth, greatly delighted with the hospitality and princely splendour of its noble owner. *

The *Hall* and the *Tiltyard* were two of the most striking features at Kenelworth, and they designate with sufficient precision two of the leading characteristics of the age of Elizabeth, its *hospitality*, and

* This enumeration is abridged from Laneham's Letter, and the "Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth Castle," reprinted in Nichols's Progresses, vol. i.

attachment to chivalric costume; the former was carried on upon a scale to which modern usage is a perfect stranger; for, as Bishop Hurd remarks, "the same bell, that called the great man to his table, invited the neighbourhood all around, and proclaimed a holiday to the whole country *;" and the latter cherished its predilections, and romantic ardour, by cultivating tilting, the sole remaining offspring of the gorgeous tournament, with scientific skill. The latter half of the sixteenth, and the commencement of the seventeenth, century, saw, indeed, the diversion of running at the ring carried to its highest degree of perfection, from which, however, it very soon afterwards began to decline, and may be said to have expired with the reign of James the First.

Yet the influence of this amusement, in exciting the heroism of the Elizabethan age, was by no means inconsiderable, and we may view the *tilt-yard* of Kenelworth, with the eyes of Dr. Hurd, "as a nursery of brave men, a very seed-plot of warriors and heroes.—And, as whimsical a figure as a young *tilter* may make in a modern eye, who will say that the virtue was not formed here, that triumphed at AXELL, and bled at ZUTPHEN." †

To complete the picture of Kenelworth-castle during this festive period, it would be desirable, could we ascertain what were the domestic economy and usages which were adopted in so large a household, and how the Queen, her ladies, and attendants, contrived to pass the hours, when the weather forbade exterior diversions, and when the masque, the banquet, and the fete, had exhausted their attractions. Fortunately we possess a sketch of this kind, from the communicative pen of Laneham, who seems to have been gifted, if we may trust his own account, with great powers of pleasing, and to have enjoyed, in an extraordinary degree, the favour and confidence of the high-born dames of honour who followed in the train of Elizabeth.

* Hurd's Moral and Political Dialogues, vol. i. p. 160. edit. of 1788.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 180.

“Methought it my part,” he relates in a letter to his friend, “somewhat to impart unto you how it is here with me, and how I lead my life, which indeed is this:—

“A mornings I rise ordinarily at seven o’clock: Then ready, I go into the Chapel; soon after eight, I get me commonly into my Lord’s chamber, or into my Lord’s presidents. There at the cupboard, after I have eaten the manchet served overnight for livery (for I dare be as bold, I promise you, as any of my friends the servants there: and indeed could I have fresh, if I would tarry; but I am of wont jolly and dry a mornings): I drink me up a good bol of ale: when in a sweet pot it is defecated by all night’s standing, the drink is the better, take that of me: and a morsel in a morning, with a sound draught, is very wholesome and good for the eye-sight: Then I am as fresh all the forenoon after, as had I eaten a whole piece of beef. Now, Sir, if the Council sit, I am at hand; wait at an inch, I warrant you: If any man make babbling, ‘Peace,’ say I, ‘wot ye where ye are?’ If I take a listener, or a pryer in at the chinks or at the lock-hole, I am by and by in the bones of him: But now they keep good order, they know me well enough: If a be a friend, or such a one as I like, I make him sit down by me on a form or a chest; let the rest walk, a God’s name.

“And here doth my language now and then stand me in good stead: My *French*, my *Spanish*, my *Dutch*, and my *Latin*: Sometime among Ambassador’s men, if their Master be within the Council: Sometime with the Ambassador himself, if he bid call his lacky, or ask me what’s a clock; and I warrant ye I answer him roundly; that they marvel to see such a fellow there: then laugh I and say nothing: Dinner and supper I have twenty places to go to, and heartily prayed to: Sometime get I to *Master Pinner*; by my faith, a worshipful Gentleman, and as careful for his charge as any her Highness hath: there find I alway good store of very good viands; we eat, and be merry, thank God and the *Queen*. Himself in feeding very temperate and moderate as ye shall see any: and yet, by your leave, of a dish, as a cold pigeon or so, that hath come to him at meat more

than he looked for, I have seen him een so by and by surfeit, as he hath plucked off his napkin, wiped his knife, and eat not a morsel more; like enough to stick in his stomach a two days after: (some hard message from the higher officers; perceive ye me?) upon search, his faithful dealing and diligence hath found him faultless.

“In afternoons and a nights, sometime am I with the right worshipful *Sir George Howard*, as good a Gentleman as any lives: And sometime, at my good *Lady Sidneys* chamber, a Noblewoman that I am as much bound unto, as any poor man may be unto so gracious a Laday; and sometime in some other place. But always among the Gentlewomen by my good will; (O, ye know thatt comes always of a gentle spirit:) And when I see company according, then can I be as lively too: Sometime I foot it with dancing: now with my gittern, and else with my cittern, then at the virginals: Ye know nothing comes amiss to me: Then carol I up a song withal; that by and by they come flocking about me like bees to honey: And ever they cry, ‘Another, good Langham, another!’ Shall I tell you? When I see *Mistress* —— (A, see a mad Knave; I had almost told all!) that she gives once but an eye or an ear; why then, man, am I blest; my grace, my courage, my cunning is doubled: She says, sometime, ‘She likes it;’ and then I like it much the better; it doth me good to hear how well I can do. And to say truth; what with mine eyes, as I can amorously gloat it, with my *Spanish* sosspires, my *French* heighes, mine *Italian* dulcets, my *Dutch* hoves, my double releas, my high reaches, my fine feigning, my deep diapason, my wanton warbles, my running, my timing, my tuning, and my twinkling, I can gracify the matters as well as the proudest of them, and was yet never stained, I thank God: By my troth, Countryman, it is some time high midnight, ere I can get from them. And thus have I told ye most of my trade, all the live-long day: what will ye more, God save the *Queene* and my *Lord*.” *

* Nichols's Progresses, vol. i. Laneham's Letter, p. 81—84.

Of this magnificent castle, the unrivalled abode of baronial hospitality, and chivalric pageantry, who can avoid lamenting the present irreparable decay, or forbear apostrophising the mouldering reliques in the pathetic, and picturesque language, which Bishop Hurd has placed in the mouth of his admired Addison?

“Where, one might ask, are the tilts and tournaments, the princely shows and sports, which were once so proudly celebrated within these walls? Where are the pageants, the studied devices, and emblems of curious invention, that set the court at a gaze, and even transported the high soul of our Elizabeth? Where now, pursued he, (pointing to that which was formerly a canal, but at present is only a meadow, with a small rivulet running through it) where is the floating island, the blaze of torches that eclipsed the day, the lady of the lake, the silken nymphs her attendants, with all the other fantastic exhibitions surpassing even the whimsies of the wildest romance? What now is become of the revelry of feasting? of the minstrelsy that took the ear so delightfully as it babbled along the valley, or floated on the surface of this lake? See there the smokeless kitchens, stretching to a length that might give room for the sacrifice of a hecatomb; the vaulted hall, which mirth and jollity have set so often in an uproar; the rooms of state, and the presence-chamber: what are they now but void and tenantless ruins, clasped with ivy, open to wind and weather, and representing to the eye nothing but the ribs and carcase, as it were, of their former state? And see, said he, that proud gate-way, once the mansion of a surly porter, who, partaking of the pride of his lord, made the crowds wait, and refused admittance, perhaps, to nobles whom fear or interest drew to these walls, to pay their homage to their master: see it now the residence of a poor tenant, who turns the key but to let himself out to his daily labour, to admit him to a short meal, and secure his nightly slumbers.”*

* Hurd's Moral and Political Dialogues, vol. i. pp. 148—150.

To this account of some of the principal diversions of the court and the metropolis, we have now to subjoin, in a compass corresponding with the scale of our work, a clear, but necessarily a brief view, of an amusement which, more than any other, is calculated to interest, and to influence every class of society. The *state, economy, and usages* of THE STAGE, therefore, during the age of Shakspeare, will occupy the remainder of this chapter, forming an introduction to a sketch of dramatic poetry, at the period of Shakspeare's commencement as a writer for the stage.

The reader is probably aware, from the very copious and bulky, though somewhat indigested, collections, which have been published on this subject, that the following detail, consisting of an arrangement of minute facts, and which aims at nothing more than a neat and lucid compendium of an intricate topic, must necessarily, at almost every step, be indebted to previous researches ; in order, therefore, to obviate a *continual* parade of reference, let it suffice, that we acknowledge the basis of our disquisition to have been derived from the labours of Steevens and Malone, as included in the last variorum edition of Shakspeare ; from the two Apologies of Mr. Chalmers ; from Decker, as reprinted by Nott ; and occasionally, from the pages of Warton, Percy, Whiter, and Gilchrist. Where references, however, are absolutely essential, they will be found in their due place.

It has been justly observed by Mr. Chalmers, that " what Augustus said of Rome, may be remarked of Elizabeth and the stage, that she found it *brick*, and left it *marble*." * At her accession in 1558, no regular theatre had been established, and the players of that period, even in the capital, were compelled to have recourse to the yards of great Inns, as the most commodious places which they could obtain for the representation of their pieces. These, being surrounded by open stages and galleries, and possessing, likewise, numerous private apartments and recesses from which the genteeler part of the audience

* Chalmers's Apology, p. 353.

might become spectators at their ease, while the central space held a temporary stage, uncovered in fine weather, and protected by an awning in bad, were not ill calculated for the purposes of scenic exhibition, and, most undoubtedly, gave rise to the form and construction, adopted in the erection of the licensed theatres.

In this stage of infancy was the public stage at the birth of Shakspeare; nor would it so rapidly have emerged into importance, had not the Queen, though occasionally yielding to the enmity and fanaticism of the puritans with regard to this recreation, been warmly attached to theatric amusements. So early as 1569, was she frequently entertained in her own chapel-royal, by the performance of plays on profane subjects, by the children belonging to that establishment; and the year following has been fixed upon as the most probable era of the erection of a regular play-house, very appropriately named *The Theatre*, and supposed to have been situated in the Blackfriars.

We shall not be surprised, therefore, to find, that in 1574 a regular *company of players* was established by *royal licence*, granting to James Burbage, John Perkyn, John Lanham, William Johnson, and Robert Wilson, servants of the Earl of Leicester, authority, under the privy seal, “to use, exercyse and occupie the arte and facultye of playenge commedies, tragedies, enterludes, stage-playes, and such other like as they have alreadie used and studied, or hereafter shall use and studie, as well for the recreation of our lovinge subjects as for our solace and pleasure when we shall thinke good to see them—throughoute our realme of England.”*

This may be considered then, with great probability, as the *first* general licence obtained by any company of players in England; but, with the customary precaution of Elizabeth, it contains a clause, subjecting all dramatic amusements to the previous inspection of the *Master of the Revels*, an officer who, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, had been created to superintend a part of the duties which until then

* See Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 48.

had fallen to the province of the Lord Chamberlain, and who now had the sphere of his control augmented by this prudent enactment, providing "that the saide commedies, tragedies, enterludes and stage-playes be by the Master of our Revels for the tyme beyng before sene and allowed."

The officers who exercised this authority, during the life of Shakspeare, were Sir Thomas Benger, Edmond Tilney, and Sir George Bucke. Sir Thomas Benger, who succeeded Sir Thomas Cawerden in 1560, lived not to see Shakspeare's entrance into the scenic world, but, dying in 1577, Tilney's appointment took place in 1579. This gentleman continued to regulate the stage for the long period of thirty-one years; he beheld the dawn and the mid-day splendour of Shakspeare's dramatic genius, and in his official capacity, he enjoyed the opportunity of licensing not less than *thirty* of his dramas, commencing with *Henry the Sixth*, and terminating with *Antony and Cleopatra*. On his death, in 1610, Sir George Bucke, who had obtained a reversionary patent for the office in 1603, and had executed its duties for twelvemonth previous to Tilney's decease, became *Master of the Revels*, and had the felicity of reading, and the honour of licensing, some of the last and noblest productions of our immortal poet, namely, *Timon of Athens*, *Coriolanus*, *Othello*, the *Tempest*, and *Twelfth Night*. He also lived to deplore the premature extinction of this unrivalled bard, and he died in the year which presented to the public the first folio edition of his plays.

The erection of a theatre in 1570; the establishment by royal authority of a regular company in 1574; and the subjection of both to highly respectable officers, operated so strongly in favour of dramatic amusements, that we find Stubbes, the puritanic satirist, bitterly inveighing in 1583 against the great popular support of the theatres in his day, which he sarcastically terms *Venus' Palaces*, and immediately afterwards designates by a general application of the names which had been given at that time to the two principal structures: "marke," says he, "the flocking and running to *theaters* and

curtens, daylie and hourelly, night and daye, tyme and tyde, to see playes and enterludes." *

This passion for the stage continued rapidly to increase, and before the year 1590 not less than four or five theatres were in existence. The patronage of dramatic representation made an equal progress at court; for though Elizabeth never, it is believed, attended a *public* theatre, yet had she four companies of children who frequently performed for her amusement, denominated the *Children of St. Pauls*, the *Children of Westminster*, the *Children of the Chapel*, and the *Children of Windsor*. The public actors too, who were sometimes, in imitation of these appellations, called the *Children of the Revels*, were, towards the close of Her Majesty's reign especially, in consequence of a greatly acquired superiority over their younger brethren, often called upon to act before her at the royal theatre in Whitehall. Exhibitions of this kind at court were usual at Christmas, on Twelfth Night, at Candlemas, and at Shrove-tide, throughout the reigns of Elizabeth and James, and the plays of Shakspeare were occasionally the entertainment of the night: thus we find *Love's Labour's Lost* to have been performed before our maiden Queen during the Christmas-holydays, and *King Lear* to have been exhibited before King James on St. Stephen's night. †

On these occasions, the representation was generally at night, that it might not interfere with the performances at the regular theatres, which took place early in the afternoon; and we learn from the Council-books, that the royal remuneration, in the age of Elizabeth, for the exhibition of a single play at Whitehall, amounted to ten pounds, of which, twenty nobles, or six pounds thirteen shillings, and four-pence, formed the customary fee; and three pounds, six shillings, and eight-pence, the free gift or bounty. If, however, the performers were required to leave the capital for any of the royal palaces in its neighbourhood, the fee, in consequence of the public

* *Anatomie of Abuses*, edit. 1583, p. 90.

† See Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. ii. p. 363. note.

exhibition of the day being prevented, was augmented to twenty pounds.

The protection of the drama by Elizabeth and her ministers, though it did not exempt the public players, except in one instance, from the penalties of statutes against vagabonds, yet it induced, during the whole of her long reign, numerous instances of private patronage from the most opulent of her nobility and gentry, who, possessing the power of licensing their own domestics as comedians, and, consequently of protecting them from the operation of the act of vagrancy, sheltered various companies of performers, under the denomination of their servants, or retainers,—a privilege which was taken away, by act of parliament, on the accession of James, and, as Mr. Chalmers observes, “put an end for ever to the scenic system of prior times.” *

To this private patronage of the latter half of the sixteenth century, we must ascribe not less than fourteen distinct companies of players, that, in succession, contributed to exhilarate the golden days of England's matchless Queen, and, in their turn, enjoyed the honour of contributing to her amusement. Of these, the following is a chronological enumeration:—Soon after the accession of Elizabeth, appeared Lord Leicester's company, the same which, in 1574, was finally incorporated by royal licence; in 1572, was formed Sir Robert Lane's company; in the same year Lord Clinton's; in 1575, companies were created by Lord Warwick, and the Lord Chamberlain, the name of Shakspeare being enrolled among the servants of the latter, who, in the first year of the subsequent reign, became entitled to the appellation of His Majesty's servants; in 1576, the Earl of Sussex brought forward a theatrical body, and in 1577, Lord Howard another, neither of which, however, attained much eminence; in 1578, the Earl of Essex mustered a company of players, and in 1579, Lord Strange, and the Earl of Derby, followed his

* Apology, p. 393.

example; in 1591, the Lord Admiral produced his set of comedians; in 1592, the Earl of Hertford effected a similar arrangement; in 1593, Lord Pembroke protected an association of actors, and, at the close of Her Majesty's reign, the Earl of Worcester had in pay, also, a company of theatrical performers.

In the mean time theatres, both public and private, were greatly on the increase, and, during the period that Shakspeare immortalised the stage, not less than *seven* of these structures, of established notoriety, were in existence. *Four* of them were considered as public theatres, namely, *The Globe* on the Bankside, *The Curtain* in Shoreditch, *The Red Bull* in St. John's Street, and *The Fortune* in Whitecross Street; and *three* were termed private houses, one, for instance, in *Blackfriars*, another in *Whitefriars*, and *The Cockpit* or *Phoenix*, in Drury-Lane. As *The Globe*, however, and the theatre in *Blackfriars* were the property of the same set of players, only six companies of comedians were formed, or wanted, for the purposes of representation.

Beside these principal play-houses, several others, possessing a more ephemeral existence, as *The Swan*, *The Rose*, &c., sprung up and fell in succession, forming altogether such a number, as justly gave alarm and offence to the stricter clergy, and at length attracted the attention of the privy-council, who, on the 22d of June, 1600, issued an order for the reduction of the number of play-houses, limiting these buildings to two, selecting that called *The Fortune* for Middlesex, and fixing on *The Globe* for Surrey. To such a degree, however, had now arisen the attachment of the people to dramatic recreations, that notwithstanding these orders were re-issued, with still stronger injunctions, the following year, they could never be carried into any effectual execution.

Much as Elizabeth favoured the stage, it appears to have been patronised by her successor with equal, if not superior, zeal. James may be said, indeed, to have given a dignity and consequence to the profession, to which it had hitherto been a stranger, and to have introduced into the theatric world, a new, and better constituted

arrangement of its parts. No sooner had he ascended the throne, than three companies were formed under his auspices; the Lord Chamberlain's servants he adopted as his own; the Queen chose the Earl of Worcester's, and Prince Henry fixed upon the Earl of Nottingham's; and on the 19th of May, only twelve days after his arrival in London, he granted to his own company, being that performing at *The Globe*, the following *licence*, which was first published in Rymer's *Fædera*, in 1705:—

“ PRO LAURENTIO FLETCHER ET WILLIELMO SHAKESPEARE ET ALIIS.

“ A.D. 1603. Pat.

“ 1. Jac. P. 2. m. 4. James by the grace of God, &c. to all justices, maiors, sheriffs, constables, headboroughs, and other our officers and loving subjects, greeting. Know you that wee, of our special grace, certaine knowledge, and meer motion, have licensed and authorised, and by these presentes doe licence and authorize theise our servaunts, Laurence Fletcher, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, Richard Burbage, Augustine Phillippes, John Hemings, Henrie Condel, William Sly, Robert Armin, Richard Cowly, and the rest of their associates, freely to use and exercise the art and faculty of playing *comedies, tragedies, histories, interludes, morals, pastorals, stage-plaies*, and such like other as thei have alreadie studied or hereafter shall use or studie, as well for the recreation of our loving subjects, as for our solace and pleasure when we shall thincke good to see them, during our pleasure: and the said comedies, tragedies, histories, enterludes, morals, pastorals, stage-plaies, and such like, to shew and exercise publicuely to their best commoditie, when the infection of the plague shall decrease, as well within their nowe usuall house called the *Globe*, within our county of Surrey, as also within anie towne-halls or moute-halls, or other convenient places within the liberties and freedom of any other citie, universitie, toun, or boroughe whatsoever, within our said realmes and dominions. Willing and commanding you and everie of you, as you tender our

pleasure, not onelie to permit and suffer them herein, without any your letts, hindrances, or molestations, during our pleasure, but also to be aiding or assistinge to them if any wrong be to them offered, and to allow them such former curtesies as hathe been given to men of their place and quallitie; and also what further favour you shall shew to theise our servaunts for our sake, we shall take kindlie at your handes. In witness whereof, &c.

“ Witness our selfe at Westminster, the nynteenth daye of Maye,

“ Per Breve de privato sigillo.” *

To *The Globe* mentioned in this licence, and to the play-house in *Blackfriars*, as being the theatres exclusively belonging to *Shakspeare's* company, and where all his dramas were performed, we shall now confine our attention, the customs and usages of these, the one being a public, and the other a private theatre, pretty accurately applying to the rest.

The exact era of the building of *The Globe* has not been ascertained. Mr. Malone, from the documents which he consulted, conceives it to have been erected not long anterior to the year 1596; and Mr. Chalmers, resting on the evidence of Norden's map of London, concludes it to have been built before the year 1593. † Its scite appears to have been on the southern side of the Thames, called the *Bankside*, and its form, which was of considerable size, to have been externally hexagonal, and internally circular. It was constructed of wood, and only partly thatched, its centre being open to the weather. It was probably named *The Globe*, not from the circularity of its interior, but from its sign exhibiting Hercules supporting the globe, under which was inscribed, *Totus mundus agit histrionem*.

* Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. iii. pp. 51, 52.

† See Malone's *Inquiry*, p. 87.; Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. iii. p. 64.; and Chalmers's *Apology*, p. 115.

Being a *public* theatre, *The Globe* was likewise distinguished by a pole erected on its roof, to which, during the hours of exhibition, a flag was attached; for, by reason of its central exposure, it necessarily became a summer theatre, its performers, the King's company, usually commencing their season here during the month of May. The exhibitions at the Globe were frequent, and it is said, chiefly calculated for the lower class of people, the upper ranks, and the critics, generally preferring the private theatres, which were smaller, and more conveniently fitted up. The advantages of elegance and decoration, however, were no longer wanting to *The Globe*, in 1614; for the old structure, consisting of wood and thatch, being burnt down on the 29th of June, 1613, the subsequent year saw it rise from its ashes with considerable splendour. *

The *Theatre in Blackfriars* may be classed among the earliest buildings of the kind, being certainly in existence before 1580. It was erected near the present site of Apothecaries' Hall, and being without the liberties of the city of London, had the good fortune to escape the levelling fury of the fanatics, who, shortly after the above period, obtained leave to destroy all the play-houses within the jurisdiction of the city.

It does not appear that Shakspeare's company, or the King's servants, had any interest in this theatre before the winter of 1604, at which period, or in the following spring, they became its purchasers; the children of the Revels, or, as they were sometimes called, the children of Blackfriars, being the usual performers at this house, prior to that event.

* Of the perishable materials, and inconvenient construction of the old theatre, we have some remarkable proofs, in two letters extant, describing the accident. The first written by Sir Henry Wotton, and dated July 2. 1613, concludes by asserting that "nothing did perish but *wood* and *straw*, and a few forsaken cloaks;" and the second from Mr. John Chamberlaine to Sir Ralph Winwood, dated July 8. 1613, remarks, that "it was a great marvaile and fair grace of God that the people had so little harm, having but *two narrow doors* to get out." — Reliquiæ Wotton, p. 425. edit. 1685; and Winwood's Memorials, vol. iii. p. 469.

The distinctions subsisting between *Blackfriars* and *The Globe*, seem to have been nothing more, than that the former being a *private*, and a *winter*, house, was smaller, more compactly put together, and, as the representations were by candle-light, better calculated for the purposes of warmth and protection. As the internal structure, however, with the exception of the open centre, was similar to that of *The Globe*, and as the economy and usages were, there is every reason to believe, the same, not only in both these houses, but in every other contemporary theatre, the subsequent notices may be considered as applying, where not otherwise expressed, to the general state of the Elizabethan stage, though immediately derived from the costume of *The Globe*.

The interior architectural arrangements of this ancient theatre have been, in their leading features, preserved to the present day. The *galleries*, or *scaffolds*, as they were sometimes called, were constructed over each other, occupying three sides of the house, and assuming, according to the plan of the building, a square or semicircular form. Beneath these were small apartments, called *rooms*, intended for the genteeler part of the audience, and answering, in almost every respect, to our modern boxes. In *The Globe*, these were open to all who chose to pay for them, but at *Blackfriars* and other private theatres, there is some reason to conclude, that they were occasionally the property of individuals, who secured their claim through the medium of a key. *

It has been remarked, that the centre of *The Globe*, or summer theatre, was open to the weather, and, from the first temporary play-houses having been built in the area of inns or common osteries, this was usually called *The Yard*. It had neither floor nor benches, and the common people standing here to see the performance, were, therefore, termed by Shakspeare *groundlings*; an epithet repeated by Decker, who speaks of "the groundling and gallery commoner,

* See Warton's History of English Poetry, vol. ii. p. 394. note.

buying his sport by the penny.* The similar space at Blackfriars was named the *Pit*, but seems to have differed in no other respect than in being protected by a roof. It was separated from the stage merely by a railing of pales, for there was no intervening orchestra, the music, consisting chiefly of trumpets, cornets, hautboys, lutes, recorders, viols, and organs, being executed by a band of eight or ten performers, who were stationed in an elevated balcony nearly occupying that part of the house which is now denominated the upper stage-box.

The stage itself appears to have been divided into two parts, namely the *lower* and the *upper* stage; the former with nearly the same relative elevation with regard to the pit as in the theatres of our own times; the latter, resembling a balcony in shape, was placed towards the rear of the former, having its platform not less than eight or nine feet from the ground. This was a contrivance attended with much conveniency; here was represented the play before the King in *Hamlet*; here, in several of the old plays, part of the dialogue was carried on, and here, having curtains which drew in front, were occasionally concealed, from the view of the audience, persons whose seclusion might be necessary to the business of the plot.

Curtains also of woollen, or silk, were hung in the front of the greater or lower stage, not suspended, in the modern style, by lines and pullies, but opening in the middle, and sliding on an iron rod.

Beside the accommodation of boxes, pit, and galleries, in the usual parts of the house, two boxes, one on each side, were attached to the balcony or upper stage, and were termed *private* boxes; but, being inconveniently situated, and, as Decker remarks, "almost smothered in darkness," were seldom frequented, except from motives of eccentricity, by characters higher than waiting-women and gentlemen-ushers.† Seats, also, at the *private* theatres, were allowed to be

* Gull's Horn-book, Nott's reprint, p. 132. † Ibid. p. 135.

placed on the stage, and were generally occupied by the wits, gallants, and critics of the day: thus Decker observes, — “by sitting on the stage, you have a signed patent to engross the whole commodity of *censure*; may lawfully presume to be a girder, and *stand at the helm to steer the passage of scenes*.” *

The passage in *italics* which closes this quotation, would seem to be decisive of the long agitated question relative to the use of *scenery*; Mr. Malone asserting, — “that the stage of Shakspeare was not furnished with *moveable painted scenes*, but merely decorated with curtains, and arras or tapestry hangings, which, when decayed, appear to have been sometimes ornamented with pictures †;” and Mr. Steevens contending, that where so much *machinery* as the plays of Shakspeare require, is allowed to have been employed, the less complicated adjunct of scenes could scarcely be wanting; for that where “the column is found standing, no one will suppose but that it was once accompanied by its usual entablature. — In short,” he adds, “without characteristic discriminations of place, the historical dramas of Shakspeare in particular would have been wrapped in tenfold confusion and obscurity; nor could the spectator have felt the poet’s power, or accompanied his rapid transitions from one situation to another, without such guides as *painted canvas* only could supply. — But for these, or such assistances, the spectator, like Hamlet’s mother, must have bent his gaze on mortifying vacancy; and with the guest invited by the Barmecide, in the Arabian tale, must have furnished from his own imagination the entertainment of which his eyes were solicited to partake.” ‡

If the machinery accompanying trap-doors, tombs, and cauldrons, the appearance of ghosts, phantoms, and monsters, the descent of gods, the magic evanishment of articles of furniture and provision, and the confiction of the elements, were not strangers to the Shakspearean theatre, it surely would have been an easy matter to have

* Gull’s Horn-book, p. 138.

† Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. iii. pp. 106—108.

‡ Ibid. p. 109. note.

transferred the *frame-work and painted canvas* which, according to Holinshed, and even preceding chroniclers, decorated the pageants and tournaments of those days, to the business of the stage. Nor can we, indeed, conceive, as Mr. Steevens has remarked, how the minute inventory of Imogen's bedchamber, and the accurate description of the exterior of Inverness Castle, could have been rendered intelligible or endurable without such assistance.

It is highly, probable, therefore, from these considerations, and from the passage in Decker, that, notwithstanding the mass of negative evidence collected by Mr. Malone, *moveable painted scenes* were occasionally introduced on the stage during the age of Shakespeare; and it may be further reasonably concluded, that, from the phrase of STEERING *the PASSAGE of scenes*, the mechanism was formed and conducted on a plan approximating that which is now familiar to a modern audience.

The conjecture of Mr. Steevens, however, that *private* theatres had no scenes, while the *public* had, owing to the former admitting part of the audience on the stage, who might interfere with the convenient shifting of such an apparatus, is annihilated by the quotation from Decker, who expressly says, that "*by SITTING ON THE STAGE, you have a signed patent to stand at the helm to steer the passage of the scenes,*" by which it would appear, that those who obtained seats on the private stage, occasionally amused themselves by assisting the regular mechanists in the adjustment of the scenery.

We learn, also, from Heywood*, that the internal roof of the stage was either painted of a sky-blue colour, or hung with drapery of a similar tint, in order to represent the HEAVENS; and there is much reason to suppose, with a very ingenious commentator, that when the idea of a gloomy and starless night was to be impressed, these *heavens* were hung with black, whence, among many passages

* Apology for Actors, 1612. sig. D.

in Shakspeare illustrative of this position, the following line manifestly owes its origin : —

“ *Hung* be the *Heavens* with *black*, yield day to night.” *

It has, likewise, been asserted, and, indeed, to a certain extent, proved, by the same learned writer, that the lower part of the stage was distinguished by the name of HELL; and he quotes the annexed passage from Chapman as decisive on the subject : —

“ The fortune of a *Stage* (like fortune’s self)
 Amazeth greatest judgments: and none knows
 The hidden causes of those strange effects,
 That rise from *this* HELL, or fall from *this* HEAVEN.” †

From this connection of the celestial and infernal regions with the stage, Mr. Whiter has inferred, through the medium of numerous pertinent quotations from Shakspeare and his contemporaries, that a vast mass of imagery was so blended and associated in the mind of our great poet, as to form an intimate union in his ideas between HELL and NIGHT; the DARKENED HEAVENS and the STAGE of TRAGEDY ‡; and this, too, at an early period, even during the composition of his Rape of Lucrece, which contains some striking instances of this theatrical combination.

To these notices on the interior structure of the Shakspearean theatre, we shall now add the most material circumstances relative to its economy and usages.

The mode of announcing its exhibitions, if we except the medium of newspapers, a resource of subsequent times, seems to have been not less effectual and extensive than that of the present day. *Play-bills* were printed, expressing the title of the piece or pieces to be performed, but containing neither the names of the characters, nor

* Whiter’s Specimen of a Commentary on Shakspeare, pp. 157, 158.

† Ibid. pp. 178. 183.; and see Prologue to *All Fools*, by Chapman, 1605, in *Old Plays*, vol. iv. p. 116.

‡ Whiter’s Specimen, p. 184.

of the actors; these were industriously circulated through the town, and affixed to posts and public buildings, a custom which forms the subject of a repartee recorded by Taylor the water-poet, who began to write towards the close of Shakspeare's life:—"Master Field, the player," he relates, "riding up Fleet-street a great pace, a gentleman called him, and asked him, what play was played that day. He being angry to be staid on so frivolous a demand, answered, that he might see what play was plaied *upon every poste*. I cry you mercy, said the gentleman, I tooke you for a *poste*, you rode so fast." *

In the early part of the reign of Elizabeth, the *Days of Acting*, at the public theatres, were chiefly confined to Sundays, Her Majesty's licence to Burbage in 1574, granting such exhibition on that day, *out of the hours of prayer*; and this was the day which the Queen herself usually selected for dramatic representation at court. The rapidly increasing taste, however, for theatric amusement soon induced the players to go beyond the limits of permission, and we find Gosson, in 1579, exclaiming, that the players, "because they are allowed to play *every Sunday*, make *four or five Sundays*, at least, every week." † A reformation more consonant to morality and decorum took place in the subsequent reign; for, though plays were still performed on Sundays, at the court of James the First, yet they were no longer tolerated on that day at the public theatres, permission being now given, on application to the Master of the Revels, for

* Taylor's Works, p. 183. — Mr. Malone is of opinion that to these play-bills we owe "the long and whimsical titles which are prefixed to the quarto copies of our author's plays.—It is indeed absurd to suppose, that the modest Shakspeare, who has more than once apologized for his *untutored lines*, should in his manuscripts have entitled any of his dramas *most excellent and pleasant performances*." Thus: —

"The *most excellent* Historie of the Merchant of Venice, 1600."

"A *most pleasant and excellent conceited* Comedie of Syr John Falstaffe and the Merry Wives of Windsor, 1602."

"The late and *much-admired* Play, called Pericles Prince of Tyre, 1609," &c. &c.

Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. pp. 163—165.

† Schoole of Abuse. — Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 154.

their performance every day, save on the Sabbath, during the winter, and with no further exception than the Wednesdays and Fridays of Lent, which were at that time called sermon-days.

The *Hours of Acting*, during the whole period of Shakspeare's career, continued to be early in the afternoon. In 1598, we are informed by an epigram of Sir John Davies, that *one o'clock* was the usual time for the commencement of the play:—

“ Fuscus doth rise at ten, and at eleven
He goes to Gyls, where he doth eat till *one*,
Then sees a play;”

and, in 1609, when Decker published his *Gull's Horn-book*, the hour was thrown back to three, nor did it become later until towards the close of the seventeenth century. The time usually consumed in the exhibition appears, from the prologue to *Henry the Eighth*, to have been only two hours:—

————— “ Those that come —
I'll undertake, may see away their *shilling*
Richly in *two short hours*.” *

The mention of payment in this passage, leads to the consideration of the *Prices of Admission*, and the sum here specified, contemporary authority informs us, was demanded for entrance into the best rooms or boxes. † Sixpence also, and sometimes a shilling, was paid for seats or stools on the stage. Sixpence was likewise the price of admission to the pit and galleries of the Globe and Blackfriars; but at inferior houses, a penny, or at most two-pence, gave access to the “groundling,” or the “gallery-commoner.” Dramatic poets, as in the present day, were admitted gratis. We may also add, that, from some verses addressed to the memory of Ben Jonson, by Jasper

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xv. p. 4.

† Decker's *Gull's Horn-book*, reprint, p. 18. note.

Mayne, and alluding to his *Volpone* or the *Fox*, acted in 1605, it is allowable to infer, that the prices of admission were, on the first representation of a new play, doubled, and even sometimes trebled. *

There is every reason to suppose, that while Shakspeare wrote for the stage, the *Number of Plays performed in One Day*, seldom, if ever, exceeded *one* tragedy, comedy, or history, and that the entertainment was varied and protracted, either by the extempore humour and tricks of the *Clown* after the play was over, or by singing, dancing, or ludicrous recitation, between the acts.

The house appears to have been pretty well supplied with *Lights*; the stage being illuminated by two large branches; the body of the house by cresset lights, formed of ropes wreathed and pitched, and placed in open iron lanterns, and these were occasionally assisted by the interspersion of wax tapers among the boxes.

The *Amusements of the Audience before the Play commenced* seem to have been amply supplied by themselves, the only recreation provided by the theatre, during this tedious interval, being the *music* of the band, which struck up thrice; playing three flourishes, or, as they were then called, *three soundings*, before the performance began; but these were of course short, being principally intended as announcements, similar to those which we now receive from the prompter's bell. To kill time, therefore, reading and playing cards were the resources of the genteeler part of the audience: "Before the play begins," says Decker to his gallant, "fall to cards; you may win or lose, as fencers do in a prize, and beat one another by confederacy, yet share the money when you meet at supper: notwithstanding, to gull the ragamuffins that stand aloof gaping at you, throw the cards, having first torn four or five of them, round about the stage, just upon the *third sound*, as though you had lost." †

* Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 175. note.

† Gull's Horn-book, reprint, p. 146.

Of the less refined amusements of these *gaping ragamuffins*, “the youths that thunder at a play-house, and fight for bitter apples*,” we find numerous traces in Decker, Jonson, and their contemporaries, which enable us to assert, that they chiefly consisted in *smoking tobacco, drinking ale, cracking nuts, and eating fruit*, which were regularly supplied by men attending in the theatre, and whose vociferation and clamour, or, as a writer of that time expresses it, “to be made *adder-deaf* with *pippin-cry* †,” were justly considered as grievous nuisances; more especially the use of tobacco, which must have been intolerable to those unaccustomed to its odour, and, indeed, occasionally drew forth the execration of individuals: thus in a work entitled, “*Dyets Dry Dinner*,” we find the author commencing an epigram on the wanton and excessive use of tobacco, in the following terms:—

“ It chaunc'd me gazing at the *Theater*,
To spie a Dock-Tabacco-Chevalier,
Clouding the loathing ayr with foggie fume
Of Dock-Tabacco; — — —
I wisht the Roman lawes severity:
Who smoke selleth, with smoke be done to dy.” ‡

The most rational of the amusements which occupied the impatient audience, was certainly that of *reading*, and this appears to have been supplied by a custom of hawking about new publications at the

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xv. p. 205. Henry VIII. act v. sc. 3.

† Notes from Black-fryers, by H. Fitz-Jeffery, 1617.

‡ “*Dyets Dry Dinner*: consisting of eight several courses. 1. Fruites. 2. Hearbes. 3. Flesh. 4. Fish. 5. Whitmeats. 6. Spice. 7. Sauce. 8. Tabacco. All served in after the order of time universall. By Henry Buttes, Maister of Artes, and Fellowe of C. C. C. in C.

Qui miscuit utile dulci.

Cicero.

Non nobis solum nati sumus, sed

Ortus nostri sibi vendicant.

Printed in London by Tho. Creede, for William Wood, and are to be sold at the West end of Powles, at the signe of Tyme, 1599.” Small 8vo.

theatre; at least this may be inferred from the opening of an address to the public, prefixed by William Fennor, to a production of his, entitled "Descriptions," and published in 1616. "To the Gentlemen readers, worthy gentlemen, of what degree soever, I suppose this pamphlet will hap into your hands, *before a play begin, with the importunate clamour of BUY A NEW BOOKE, by some needy companion, that will be glad to furnish you with worke for a turn'd teaster.*" *

As soon as the third sounding had finished, it was usual for the person whose province it was to speak the *Prologue*, immediately to enter. As a diffident and supplicatory manner were thought essential to this character, who is termed by Decker, "the *quaking Prologue*," it was the custom to clothe him in a *long black velvet cloak*, to which Shirley adds, a *little beard*, a *starch'd face*, and a *supple leg*.†

On withdrawing the curtain, the stage was generally found strewed with *rushes*, which, in Shakspeare's time, as hath been remarked in our first volume, formed the common covering of floors, from the palace to the cottage‡; but, on very splendid occasions, it was *matted* entirely over; thus, Sir Henry Wotton, in a letter which describes the conflagration of the Globe Theatre, in 1613, says, that on the night of the accident, "the King's Players had a new play, called *All is true*, representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry the Eighth, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, *even to the matting of the stage.*" §

* "Fennors Descriptions, or a true relation of certaine and divers speeches, spoken before the King and Queene's most excellent Majestie, the Prince his highnesse, and the Lady Elizabeth's Grace. By William Fennor, his Majestie's Servant. London, Printed by Edvvard Griffin, for George Gibbs, and are to bee sold at his shop in Paul's Church-yard, at the signe of the Flower-De-luce, 1616." 4to.

† Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 120. note.

‡ Vide Decker's Gull's Horn-book, reprint, p. 135.

§ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 68. note.

The performance of *tragedy* appears to have been attended with some peculiar preparations; one of which was *hanging the stage with black*, a practice which dwelt on Shakspeare's recollection when, in writing his *Rape of Lucrece*, he speaks of

“ *Black stage for tragedies, and murthers fell;*” *

and is put out of dispute by a passage in the *Induction* to an anonymous tragedy, entitled, *A Warning for fair Women*, 1599, where *History*, addressing *Comedy*, says:—

“ Look, *Comedie*, I mark'd it not till now,
The stage is hung with blacke, and I perceive
The auditors prepar'd for *tragedie* :”

to which *Comedy* replies:—

“ Nay then, I see she shall be entertain'd;
These ornaments beseeem not thee and me.” †

If the decorations of the stage itself could boast but little splendour, the *wardrobe*, even of The Globe and Blackfriars, could not be supposed either richly or amply furnished; in fact, even Jonson, in 1625, nine years after Shakspeare's death, betrays the poverty of the *stage-dresses*, when he exclaims in the *Induction* to his *Staple of News*, “ O curiosity, you come to see who wears the new suit to-day; whose clothes are best pen'd, &c.—what king plays *without cuffs*, and his queen *without gloves*: who rides post in *stockings*, and dances in *boots*.” ‡ It is evident, therefore, that the dramas of our great poet could derive little attraction from magnificence of attire, though it

* Malone's Supplement, vol. i. p. 517.—“ The hanging however was,” remarks the editor, “ I suppose, no more than one piece of black baize placed at the back of the stage, in the room of the tapestry which was the common decoration when comedies were acted.”

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 111. note.

‡ Whalley's Works of Ben Jonson; Prologue in *Induction*.

appears, from a passage in Jonson, that not only was there a prompter, or *book-holder*, but likewise a property, or *tire-man*, belonging to each theatre, in 1601.* *Periwigs*, which came into fashion about 1596, were often worn on the stage by male characters, whence Hamlet is represented calling a ranting player, "a robustious *periwig-pated* fellow †;" *masks* or *vizards* were also sometimes used by those who personated female characters; thus Quince tells Flute, in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, on his objecting to perform a woman's part, that he "shall play it in a *mask*." ‡

Female characters indeed, were on the old English stage, as they had been on the Grecian and Roman, *always personated by men or boys*, a practice which continued with us until near the period of the Restoration. Italy and France long preceded us in the introduction of women on the theatric boards; for Coryate writing from Venice in 1608, and describing one of the theatres of that city, says, "the house is very beggarly and base, in comparison of our stately play-houses in England;" and he then adds, what must give us a wretched idea of the state of the stage at that time in Italy, "neither can their actors compare with us for apparell, shewes, and musicke. Here," he continues, "I observed certaine things that I never saw before; for *I saw women act, a thing that I never saw before*." §

The mode of expressing dislike of, or censuring a play, was as decided in the days of Shakspeare as in the present age, and sometimes effected by the same means. Decker gives us two methods of expressing disapprobation; one, by leaving the house with as many in your train as you can collect, the other, by staying, in order to interrupt the performance: "you shall disgrace him (the poet) worse," he observes, "than by tossing him in a blanket, or giving him the bastinado in a tavern, if, in the middle of his play, be it

* Whalley's Jonson; Cynthia's Revels, Induction.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 181. Act iii. sc. 2.

‡ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 338. Act i. sc. 2.

§ Coryate's Crudities, 4to. 1611, p. 247.

pastoral or comedy, moral or tragedy, you rise with a screwed and discontented face from your stool to be gone;" — and "salute all your gentle acquaintance, that are spread either on the rushes, or on stools about you; and draw what troop you can from the stage after you:" but, "if either the company, or indisposition of the weather bind you to sit it out;—*mew* at passionate speeches; *blare* at merry; find fault with the musick; *whew* at the children's action; *whistle* at the songs *;" modes of annoyance sufficiently provoking, and occasionally very effectual toward the final condemnation of a play, as Ben Jonson experienced in more instances than one. †

It was usual also for the critics and coxcombs of the day, either from motives of curiosity, vanity, or malevolence, to carry to the theatre *table-books*, made of small plates of slate bound together in duodecimo, and to take down passages from the play, for the purpose either of retailing them in taverns and parties, or with the view of ridiculing and degrading the author; "to such, wherever they sit concealed," says the indignant Jonson in 1601, "let them know, the author defies them and their *writing-tables*." ‡

An *Epilogue*, sometimes spoken by one of the *Dramatis Personæ*, and sometimes by an extra character, was not uncommon at this period; and, when employed, generally terminated, if in a public theatre, with a *prayer* for the king or queen; if, in a private one, for the lord of the mansion. The prayer, however, was, almost always, a necessary form, whether an epilogue were adopted or not; and, on these occasions, whatever may have been the nature of the preceding drama, the players, kneeling down, solemnly addressed themselves to their devotions: thus Shakspeare concludes his Epilogue to the Second Part of *King Henry the Fourth*, by telling his audience, "I

* Gull's Horn-book, reprint, pp. 147—149.

† Sejanus, Catiline, and The New Inn, were all condemned.

‡ "There is reason to believe," remarks Mr. Malone, "that the imperfect and mutilated copies of one or two of Shakspeare's dramas, which are yet extant, were taken down by the ear, or in short-hand, during the exhibition."—Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 151.

will bid you good night: and so *kneel down* before you;—but, indeed, *to pray for the queen* *;” and Sir John Harrington closes his *Metamorphosis of Ajax*, 1596, with the following sarcastic mention of this custom as retained in *private* theatres:—“But I will neither end with sermon nor prayer, lest some wags liken me to my L. () players, who when they have ended a baudie comedy, as though that were a preparative to devotion, kneele down solemnly, and pray all the companie to pray with them for their good lord and maister.” Considering the place chosen for its display, this is, certainly, a custom

“More honour’d in the breach, than the observance.”

With regard to the *Remuneration of Actors*, during the age of Shakspeare, it has been ascertained, that, after deducting forty-five shillings, which were the usual nightly, or rather daily, expenses at the Globe and Blackfriars, the *net* receipt never amounted to more than twenty pounds, and that the *average* receipt, after making a similar deduction, may be estimated at about *nine pounds*. This sum Mr. Malone supposes to have been in our poet’s time “divided into forty shares, of which fifteen were appropriated to the house keepers or proprietors, three to the purchase of copies of new plays, stage-habits, &c. and twenty-two to the actors.” He further calculates, that, as the acting season lasted forty weeks, and each company consisted of about twenty persons, six of whom probably were principal, and the others subordinate performers, if we suppose *two shares* to have been the reward of a principal actor; *one share* that of a second class composed of six, and *half a share* the portion of the remaining eight, the performer who had *two shares*, would, on the calculation of nine pounds *clear* per night, receive nine shillings as his nightly dividend, and, at the rate of five plays a week, his weekly profit would amount to two pounds five shillings. “On all these *data*,”

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xii. p. 263.

adds Mr. Malone, "I think it may be safely concluded, that the performers of the first class did not derive from their profession more than ninety pounds a year at the utmost. Shakspeare, Heminge, Condell, Burbadge, Lowin, and Taylor had without doubt other shares as proprietors or leaseholders; but what the different proportions were which each of them possessed in that right, it is now impossible to ascertain." * If we consider, however, the value of money during the reign of Elizabeth, and the relative prices of the necessary articles of life, it will be found that these salaries were not inadequate to the purposes of comfortable subsistence.

The profits accruing to the original source of the entertainment, or, in other words, the *Remuneration given to the Dramatic Poet*, was certainly, if we compare the claims of genius between the two parties, on a scale inferior to that which fell to the lot of the actor.

The author had the choice of two modes in the disposal of his property; he either sold the copy-right of his play to the theatre, or retained it in his own hands. In the former instance, which was frequently had recourse to in the age of Shakspeare, the only emolument was that derived from the purchase made by the proprietors of the theatre, who took care to secure the performance of the piece exclusively to their own company, and whose interest it was to defer its publication as long as possible; in the latter instance, not only had the poet the right of publication and the benefit of sale in his own option, but he had, likewise, a claim upon the theatre for a benefit. This, towards the termination of the sixteenth century, took place on the *second* day †, but

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 190.

† In Davenant's *Play-house to be Let*, occurs the following passage:—

"There is an old tradition,
That in the times of mighty *Tamberlane*,
Of conjuring *Faustus* and the *Beauchamps* bold,
You poets used to have the *second* day."

was soon afterwards, as early indeed as 1612, postponed to the *third day*. *

From a publication of Robert Greene's, dated 1592, it appears, that the price of a drama, when disposed of to the *public players*, was twenty nobles, or six pounds thirteen shillings and four pence; but that *private companies* would sometimes give double that † sum. It has been recorded, indeed, by Oldys, in one of his manuscripts, but upon what authority is not mentioned, that Shakspeare received but *five pounds* for his *Hamlet*! ‡

What a *bookseller* gave for the *copyright* of a play at this period is unknown; but we have sufficient foundation, that of the bookseller's Preface to the quarto edition of our poet's *Troilus and Cressida* in 1609, for asserting, that *sixpence* was the sale price of a play when published. § It may also be affirmed, on grounds of equal security, that *forty shillings* formed the customary compliment for the flattery of a dedication. ||

To these notices concerning the pecuniary rewards of poets and performers, may be added the conjecture of Mr. Malone, that Shakspeare, "as author, actor, and proprietor, probably received from the theatre about two hundred pounds a year." ¶

* On the authority of Decker's Prologue to one of his comedies entitled, *If this be not a good Play the Devil's in't*, 1612:—

———— "Not caring, so he gains
A cram'd *third day*."

† "Master R. G., would it not make you blush—if you sold *Orlando Furioso* to the queenes players for *twenty nobles*, and when they were in the country, sold the same play to Lord Admirals men, for *as much more*?"—Defence of Coney-catching, 1592.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 172.

§ "Had I time I would comment upon it, though I know it needs not, (for so much as will make you thinke your *testerne* well bestowd) but for so much worth, as even poore I know to be stuf in it."—Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xv. p. 226.

|| "I did determine not to have *dedicated* my play to any body, because *forty shillings* I care not for; and above, few or none will bestow on these matters."—Dedication to *A Woman's a Weathercock*, a comedy by N. Field, 1612.

¶ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 191.

From this description of the architecture, economy, and usages of the Shakspearean Stage, it must be evident, how trifling were the obligations of our great poet to the adventitious aid of scenery, machinery, and decoration, notwithstanding we have admitted these to be somewhat more elaborate than is usually allowed. The Art of Acting, however, had, during the same period, made very rapid strides towards perfection, and dramatic action and expression, therefore, coadjutors of infinitely more importance than the most splendid scenical apparatus, exhibited, we have reason to believe, powers in a great degree competent to the task of doing justice to the imperishable productions of this unrivalled bard of pity and of terror.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BRIEF VIEW OF DRAMATIC POETRY, FROM THE BIRTH OF SHAKSPEARE TO THE PERIOD OF HIS COMMENCEMENT AS A WRITER FOR THE STAGE, ABOUT THE YEAR 1590; WITH CRITICAL NOTICES OF THE DRAMATIC POETS WHO FLOURISHED DURING THAT INTERVAL.

It is remarkable that the era of the birth of Shakspeare should occur in almost *intermediate contact* with those periods which mark the first appearance of what may be termed *legitimate* tragedy and comedy. In 1561-2, was exhibited the tragedy of *Ferrex and Porrex*, written by Thomas Norton, and Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, "the first specimen," observes Mr. Warton, "in our language of an heroick tale written in verse, and divided into acts and scenes, and cloathed in all the formalities of a *regular tragedy* *;" in 1564, as is well known, the leading object of our work, the great poet of nature, was born; and, in 1566, was acted at Christ's College, Cambridge, under the quaint title of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, the first play, remarks Wright, "that looks like a *regular comedy*." †

Previous to the exhibition of these pieces, the public had been contented with *Mysteries*, *Moralities*, and *Interludes*; the first of these, exclusively occupied by miracles and scriptural narratives, originated with the ecclesiastics so far back as the eleventh century ‡; the second, consisting chiefly of allegorical personification, seems to have arisen about the middle of the fifteenth century §; and the third, a species of farce, or, as Jonson defines them, *something played at the intervals of festivity*, became prevalent during the reign of Henry the Eighth.

* Warton's Hist. of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 355.

† Vide Historia Histrionica.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 6. 11. See, also, Percy and Warton.

§ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 29; and Warton's Hist. of English Poetry, vol. ii. p. 199.

The examples, however, which were now furnished by Sackville and Still, in the production of *Gorboduc**, and *Gammer Gurton*, were not lost upon their age; and to the ideas of legitimate fable emanating from these sources, are also to be added those derived from the now frequent custom of acting plays in the schools and universities, in imitation of the dramas of Plautus and Terence. To these co-operating causes may be ascribed the numerous tragedies and plays which appeared between the years 1566 and 1590, principally written by men who had been educated at the universities, and who, in the serious drama, endeavoured to support the stately and declamatory style of *Gorboduc*.

It is to this period, also, that we must refer for the epoch of the historical drama, or, what were called, in the language of their times, *Histories*, a gradual improvement, it is true, on the allegorical *Dramatis Personæ* of the moralities, but which, in the interval elapsing between 1570 and 1590, received a consistency and form, a materiality and organisation, which only required the animating fire of Shakspeare's muse to kindle into life and immortality.

For the prevalence and popularity of this species of play, anterior to the productions of our poet, we are probably indebted to the publication of *The Mirrour for Magistrates*, a poetical miscellany, of which four editions were printed between 1564 and 1590, and where the most remarkable personages in English history are brought forward relating the story of their own disasters.

Another and very popular species of dramatic composition, at this era, may be satisfactorily deduced from the strong attachment still existing for the ancient *moralities*, in which the most solemn and serious subjects were often blended with the lowest scenes of farce and broad humour; for though the taste of the educated part of the public was chastened and improved by the classical tragedy of Sackville, and by the translations also of Gascoigne, who, in 1566, pre-

* See Ancient British Drama, vol. i. both for this play and *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, as edited by Walter Scott.

sented his countrymen with *Jocasta* from Euripides, and *The Supposes*, a regular comedy, from Ariosto, yet the lower orders still lingered for the mingled buffoonery of their old stage, and *tragic-comedy* became necessary so catch their applause. This apparently heterogenous compound was long the most fascinating entertainment of the scenical world; nor were even the wildest features of the allegorical drama unrepresented; for the *interlude* and, subsequently, the *masque*, were frequently lavish in the creation of personages equally as extravagant and grotesque as any which the fifteenth century had dared to produce.

To this enumeration of the various kinds of dramatic poetry which preceded the efforts of Shakspeare, one more, of a very singular nature, must be added, the production of Richard Tarleton, the celebrated jester and comedian, who, previous to 1589, or during the course of that year, exhibited a play in two parts, called "The Seven Deadlie Sins." * The piece itself has perished, but the Platt, or groundwork, of the Second Part, having been preserved, we find that the preceding portion had been occupied in exemplifying the sins of *Pride*, *Gluttony*, *Wrath*, and *Avarice*, while *Envy*, *Sloth*, and *Lechery*, were reserved for its successor. The plan which Tarleton pursued, in illustrating the effects of these sins, was by selecting scenes and passages from the plays of various authors, and combining them into a whole by the connecting medium of chorusses, interlocutors, and pantomimic show. Thus the Second Part is composed from three plays, namely, Sackville's *Gorboduc*, and two, now lost, entitled *Sardanapalus* and *Tereus*, while the moralisation and connection are introduced and supported by alternate monologues in the persons of Henry the Sixth, and Lidgate, the monk of Bury. This curious specimen of scenic exhibition may not unaptly receive the appellation of the *Composite Drama*.

After this short *general* sketch of the progress of dramatic poetry

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 404.

from 1564 to 1591, it will be necessary to descend to some *particular* criticism on the chief productions which graced the stage during this interval; an attempt which we shall conduct chronologically, under the names of their respective authors.

1. SACKVILLE, THOMAS. Though the tragedy of Sackville was exhibited before Queen Elizabeth at Whitehall, on the 18th of January, 1561-2, it did not reach the press until 1565, when a spurious edition was published under the title of *The Tragedie of Gorboduc*. This piracy brought forth a legitimate copy in 1571, from the press of John Daye, which was now called *The Tragedie of Ferrex and Porrex*; but the nomenclature was again altered in a third edition, printed for Edward Alde, in 1590, reassuming its first and more popular denomination of *The Tragedie of Gorboduc*.

The first and third editions inform us in their title-pages, that "three acts were written by Thomas Norton, and the two last by Thomas Sackville," a co-partnership which, but for this intimation, would not have been suspected, for the whole has the appearance, both in matter and style, of having issued from one and the same pen.

If the mechanism of this play, which Warton justly calls the "first genuine English Tragedy *," approximate in the minor parts of its construction to a classical type, being regularly divided into acts and scenes, with a chorus of British sages closing every act save the last, yet does it evince, in many other respects, the infancy of dramatic art in this country. Every act is preceded by an elaborate *Dumb Show*, allegorically depicting the business of the immediately succeeding scenes, a resource, the crude nature of which sufficiently points out the stage of poetry that gave it birth. Nor is the conduct of the fable less inconsistent with the exterior formalities of the piece, the unities of time and place being openly violated, and the chronological detail of history, or rather of the fabulous annals of

* Warton's Hist. of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 210.

the age, closely followed. The plot, too, is sterile and uninteresting, and the passions are touched with a feeble and ineffective hand.

The great merit, indeed, of *Gorboduc*, is in its style and versification, in its moral and political wisdom, qualities which recommended it to the notice and encomium of Sir Philip Sidney, who tells us, that “*Gorboduc* is full of stately speeches, and well sounding phrases, climbing to the heighth of Seneca his style, and as full of notable morality, which it doth most delightfully teach.”* Declaration and morality, however, are not the essentials of tragedy; the first, indeed, is a positive fault, and the second should only be the result of the struggle and collision of the passions. We must, therefore, limit the beneficial example of Sackville to purity and perspicuity of diction, to skill in the structure of his numbers, and to truth and dignity of sentiment. If to these virtues of composition, though occasionally encumbered by a too unbending rigidity of style, his contemporaries had paid due attention, we should have escaped that torrent of tumor and bombast which, shortly afterwards, inundated the dramatic world, and which continued to disgrace the national taste during the whole period to which this chapter is confined.

2. EDWARDS, RICHARD. This poet, one of the gentlemen of Queen Elizabeth’s chapel, and master of the children there, was the author of two plays, under the titles of *Damon and Pithias*, and *Palamon and Arcite*. The former of these was acted before the Queen, at court, in 1562, and first published in 1571, by Richard Jones, who terms it *The excellent comedie of two the moste faithfullest freendes Damon and Pithias*; it is an early specimen of tragi-comedy, and written in rhyme, the inferior characters exhibiting a vein of coarse humour, and the more elevated, some touches of pathos, which the story, indeed, could scarcely fail to elicit, and some faint attempts at

* Defence of Poesie, pp. 561, 562.—Vide Countess of Pembroke’s *Arcadia*, folio, 7th. edit. 1629.

discrimination of character. The versification is singular, consisting generally of couplets of twelve syllables, but frequently intermixed with lines varying upwards from this number, even as far as eighteen. *Palamon and Arcite*, which was considered as far surpassing his first drama, had the honour also of being performed before Elizabeth, at Christ-Church Hall, Oxford, in 1566; it is likewise termed a *comedy*, and is said to have gratified Her Majesty so highly, that, sending for the author, after the play was finished, she greatly commended his talents, thanked him for the entertainment which his muse had afforded her, and promised to befriend him more substantially hereafter, an intention, however, which was frustrated by the death of the poet during the course of that very year.

Edwards appears to have been very popular, and highly estimated as a writer. Puttenham has classed him with those who "deserve the highest price for comedy and interlude*," and Thomas Twine calls him, in an epitaph on his death,

—— "the flowre of all our realme,
And Phoenix of our age,"

assigning him immortality expressly on account of his dramatic productions.†

3. STILL, JOHN, a prelate to whom is ascribed, upon pretty good foundation, the first genuine comedy in our language. He was Master of Arts of Christ's College, Cambridge, at the period of producing *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, and subsequently became rector of Hadleigh, in the county of Suffolk, archdeacon of Sudbury, master of St. John's and Trinity Colleges, and lastly bishop of Bath and Wells.

Gammer Gurton's Needle, which, as we have already remarked, had been first acted in 1566, was committed to the press in 1575, under

* *Arte of English Poesie*, reprint, p. 51.

† Chalmers's *English Poets*, vol. ii. Turberville's *Poems*, p. 620.

the following title :—" A ryght pithy, pleasant, and merie Comedy, intytuled Gammer Gurton's Nedle; played on the stage not longe ago in Christes Colledge, in Cambridge. Made by Mr. S. master of art. Imprinted at London in Fleetestreat, beneth the Conduit, at the signe of S. John Evangelest, by Thomas Colwell."

The humour of this curious old drama, which is written in rhyme, is broad, familiar, and grotesque; the characters are sketched with a strong, though coarse, outline, and are to the last consistently supported. The language, and many of the incidents, are gross and indelicate; but these, and numerous allusions to obsolete customs, mark the manners of the times, when the most learned and polished of the land, the inmates of an University, could listen with delight to dialogue often tinged with the lowest filth and abuse. It must be confessed, however, that this play, with all its faults, has an interest which many of its immediate, and more pretending successors, have failed to attain. It is evidently the production of a man of talents and observation, and the second act opens with a drinking song, valuable alike for its humour, and the ease and spirit of its versification.

4. GASCOIGNE, GEORGE. At the very period when Still produced his comedy in *rhyme*, Gascoigne presented the public with a specimen of the same species of drama in *prose*. This is a translation from the Italian, entitled, "*The Supposes*. A comedie written in the Italian tongue by Ariosto, Englished by George Gascoigne of Graies-inn esquire, and there presented, 1566."

"The dialogue of this comedy," observes Warton, "is supported with much ease and spirit, and has often the air of a modern conversation. As Gascoigne was the *first* who exhibited on our stage a story from Euripides, so in this play he is *the first that produced an English comedy in prose*." *

The translation from the *Phænissæ* of Euripides, or, as Gascoigne

* History of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 474.

termed it, *Jocasta*, was acted in the refectory of Gray's Inn, in the same year with the *Supposes*. It was the joint production of our poet and his friend Francis Kinwelmersh, the first and fourth acts being written by the latter bard. *Jocasta* is more a paraphrase than a translation, and occasionally aspires to the honours of original composition, new odes being sometimes substituted for those of the Greek chorus. The dialogue of this play is given in blank verse, forming one of the earliest specimens of this measure, and, like *Gorboduc*, each act is preceded by a dumb show, and closed by a long ode, in the composition of which, both Gascoigne and his coadjutor have evinced considerable lyric powers.

Shakspeare seems to have been indebted to the *Supposes* of Gascoigne for the name of Petruchio, in the *Taming of the Shrew*, and for the incident which closes the second scene of the fourth act of that play. *

5. WAGER, LEWIS, the author of an Interlude, called *Mary Magdalen, Her Life and Repentance*, 1567. 4to. This, like most of the interludes of the same age, required, as we are told in the title-page, only four persons for its performance. The subject, which is taken from the seventh chapter of St. Luke, had been a favourite with the writers of the ancient Mysteries, of which pieces one, written in 1512, is still preserved in the Bodleian Library. †

6. WILMOT, ROBERT, a student of the Inner Temple, the publisher, and one of the writers of an old tragedy, intitled *Tancred and Gismond* or *Gismonde of Salerne*, the composition of not less than five Templers, and performed before Elizabeth in 1568. Each of these gentlemen, says Warton, "seems to have taken an act. At the end of the fourth is *Composuit Chr. Hatton*, or Sir Christopher Hatton, undoubtedly the same that was afterwards exalted by the Queen to the office of lord keeper for his agility in dancing." ‡

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ix. p. 144. note by Farmer.

† MS. Digb. 133.

‡ Hist. of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 376. note.

Wilmot, who is mentioned with approbation in Webbe's "Discourse of English Poetrie *," corrected and improved, many years after the first composition, the united labours of himself and his brother Templers, printing them with the following title: "*The Tragedie of Tancred and Gismond*. Compiled by the Gentlemen of the Inner Temple, and by them presented before Her Majestie. Newly revived and polished according to the decorum of these daies. By R. W. London. Printed by Thomas Scarlet, and are to be solde by E. C. R. Robinson. 1592."

In a dedication to his fellow-students, the editor incidentally fixes the era of the first production of his drama: "I am now bold to present Gismund to your sights, and unto your's only, for therefore have I conjured her by the love that hath been these *twenty-four years* betwixt us, that she wax not so proud of her fresh painting, to straggle in her plumes abroad, but to contain herself within the walls of your house; so am I sure she shall be safe from the tragedian tyrants of our time, who are not ashamed to affirm that there can no amorous poem favour of any sharpness of wit, unless it be seasoned with scurrilous words."

From a fragment of this play as *originally* written, and inserted in the *Censura Literaria*, it appears to have been composed in alternate rhyme, and, we may add, displays both simplicity in its diction, and pathos in its sentiment. An imperfect copy of Wilmot's revision, and perhaps the only one in existence, is in the Garrick Collection. †

7. GARTER, THOMAS. To this person has been ascribed by Coxeter, *The Commodity of the moste vertuous and godlye Susanna*; it was entered on the Stationers' books in 1568, and probably first performed about that period; its being in black letter, in metre, and not divided into acts, are certainly strong indications of its antiquity. It was reprinted in 4to. 1578.

* Sign. C 4.

† Vide *Censura Literaria*, vol. vii. p. 305. et seq.; and Dodsley's *Old Plays*, by Reed, vol. ii. p. 154.

8. PRESTON, THOMAS, was master of arts, and fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and afterwards doctor of laws, and master of Trinity-Hall. Taking a part in the performance of John Ritwise's Latin tragedy of *Dido*, got up for the entertainment of the Queen when she visited Cambridge in 1564, Her Majesty was so delighted with the grace and spirit of his acting, that she conferred upon him a pension of *twenty pounds a year*, being rather more than *a shilling a day*; a transaction which Mr. Steevens conceives to have been ridiculed by Shakspeare in his *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, where Flute, on the absence of Bottom, exclaims, "O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a-day during his life; he could not have 'scaped sixpence a-day: an the duke had not given him sixpence a-day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged; he would have deserved it: sixpence a-day, in Pyramus, or nothing." *

Nor was this the only sly allusion which Preston experienced from the pen of Shakspeare. Langbaine, Theobald, and Farmer consider the following speech of Falstaff as referring to a production of this writer:—"Give me a cup of sack," says the Knight, "to make mine eyes look red, that it may be thought I have wept; for I must speak in passion, and I will do it in king Cambyeses' vein." †

The play satirised under the name of this monarch, is entitled, "A Lamentable Tragedy, mixed ful of pleasant Mirth, conteyning the Life of Cambises, King of Percia, from the beginning of his Kingdome, unto his Death, his one good deed of execution; after that many wicked deeds, and tyrannous murders committed by and through him; and last of all, his odious Death, by God's justice appointed. Don in such order as followeth, by Thomas Preston." Imprinted at London, by Edwarde Allde. 4to. B. L.

This curious drama, which was written and published about 1570, being in the old metre, a species of ballad stanza, the allusion in Shakspeare must have been rather to the effect, than to the form, of

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 461. Act iv. sc. 2. † Ibid. vol. xi. p. 301.

King Cambyses' vein, perhaps referring solely, as Dr. Farmer observes, to the following marginal direction,—“ At this tale tolde, let the queen weep.” *

From the *Division of the Partes*, as given by Mr. Beloe, this very scarce tragi-comedy seems to have been partly allegorical, and, from the specimen produced in the *Biographia Dramatica*, to have justly merited the ridicule which it was its fate to excite. †

9. WAPUL, GEORGE, the author of a play called “ *Tide Tarrieth for No Man*. A most pleasaunte and merry Comedie, ryght pithy and fulle of delighte.” It was entered on the Stationers' books in October, 1576, and reprinted in 1611, 4to. B. L. This drama appears to be irrecoverably lost, as we can find no trace of it, save the title.

10. LUPTON, THOMAS. Of this writer nothing more is known, than that he wrote one play, which is to be found in the Collection of Mr. Garrick, and under the appellation of “ *A Moral and Pitieful Comedie, entitled All for Money*. Plainly representing the Manners of Men and Fashion of the World nowe adaies. Compiled by T. Lupton. At London, printed by Roger Warde and Richard Munde, dwelling at Temple Barre. Anno 1578.” It is written in rhyme, printed in black letter, the pages unnumbered, and the style very antique and peculiar. The characters are altogether figurative and allegorical, and form one of the most grotesque examples of *Dramatis Personæ* extant. We have *Learning with Money*, *Learning without Money*, *Money without Learning*, and *Neither Money nor Learning*; we have also *Mischievous Helpe*, *Pleasure*, *Prest for Pleasure*, *Sinne*, *Swift to Sinne*, *Damnation*, *Satan*, *Pride*, and *Gluttonie*; again, *Gregoria Graceless*, *William with the two Wives*, *St. Laurence*, *Mother Crooke*, *Judas*, *Dives*, and *Godly Admonition*, &c. &c. Like many other dramatic pieces of the same age, it is evidently the offspring of the old Moralities, an attachment to

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xi. p. 302. note.

† Vide Beloe's *Anecdotes of Literature*, vol. i. p. 323.; and *Biographia Dramatica* apud Reed, vol. i. p. 362.

which continued to linger among the lower classes for many subsequent years.

11. WHETSTONE, GEORGE. To this bard, more remarkable for his miscellaneous than his dramatic poetry, we are indebted for one play, viz. "*The right excellent and famous Historye of Promos and Cassandra*. Devided into two Commicall Discourses." 4to. B. L. 1578.

An extrinsic importance affixing itself to this production, in consequence of its having furnished Shakspeare with several hints for his *Measure for Measure*, has occasioned its re-publication. * "The curious reader," remarks Mr. Steevens, "will find that this old play exhibits an almost complete embryo of *Measure for Measure*; yet the hints on which it is formed are so slight, that it is nearly as impossible to detect them, as it is to point out in the acorn the future ramifications of the oak." †

The fable of *Promos and Cassandra* furnishes little interest, in the hands of Whetstone; nor are the diction and versification such as can claim even the award of mediocrity. It is chiefly written in alternate rhyme, with no pathos in its serious, and with feeble efforts at humour in its comic, parts.

12. WOOD, NATHANIEL, a clergyman of the city of Norwich, and only-known as the producer of "*An Excellent New Comedie*, entitled, *The Conflict of Conscience*, contayninge a most lamentable example of the doleful desparation of a miserable worldlinge, termed by the name of *Philologus*, who forsooke the trueth of God's Gospel for feare of the losse of lyfe and worldly goods." 4to. 1581. This is another of the numerous spawn which issued from the ancient Mysteries and Moralities; the *Dramatis Personæ*, consisting of a strange medley of personified vices and real characters, are divided into six parts, "most convenient," says the author, "for such as be

* Among "Six Old Plays, on which Shakspeare founded his *Measure for Measure*, *Comedy of Errors*," &c. &c.; reprinted from the original editions, 2 vols. 8vo. 1779.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vi. p. 184.

disposed either to shew this Comédie in private houses or otherwise." It is in the Garrick Collection, and very rare.

13. PEELE, GEORGE, the first of a train of play-wrights, who made a conspicuous figure just previous to the commencement, and during the earlier years, of Shakspeare's dramatic career. Educated at the University of Oxford, where he took his degree of Master of Arts in 1579, Peele shortly afterwards removed to London, and became the city poet, and a conductor of the pageants. His dramatic talents, like those which he exhibited in miscellaneous poetry, have been rated too high; the latter, notwithstanding Nash terms him "the chief supporter of pleasance, the atlas of poetrie, and *primus verborum artifex*," with the exception of two or three pastoral pieces, seldom attain mediocrity; and the former, though Wood has told us that "his plays were not only often acted with great applause in his life-time, but did also endure reading, with due commendation, many years after his death *," are now, and perhaps not undeservedly, held in little estimation. The piece which entitles him to notice in this chapter was printed in 1584, under the appellation of *The Arraignment of Paris*; it is a pastoral drama, which was performed before the Queen, by the children of her chapel, and has had the honour of being attributed, though without any foundation, to the muse of Shakspeare. † Peele, who is supposed to have died about 1597, produced four additional plays, namely, *Edward the First*, 4to. 1593; *The Old Wive's Tale*, 4to. 1595; *King David and Fair Bethsabe*, published after his death in 1599, and *The Turkish Mahomet and Hyron the Fair Greek*, which was never printed, and is now lost. From this unpublished play Shakspeare has taken a passage which he puts into the mouth of Pistol, who, in reference to Doll Tearsheet, calls out, *Have we not Hiren here ‡?* a quotation which is to be detected in several other plays, *Hiren* as we find, from one of our author's tracts, named *The Merie Conceited Jests of George Peele*,

* Biographia Dramatica, vol. i. p. 351.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xii. p. 90.

‡ Ibid. vol. ii. p. 21.

being synonymous with the word courtezan.* These allusions, however, mark the popularity of the piece, and his contemporary Robert Greene classes him with Marlowe and Lodge, "no less deserving," he remarks, "in some things rarer, in nothing inferior."† From the specimens, however, which we possess of his dramatic genius, the opinion of Greene will not readily meet with a modern assent; the pastoral and descriptive parts of his plays are the best, which are often clothed in sweet and flowing verse; but, as dramas, they are nerveless, passionless, and therefore ineffective in point of character.‡

14. LILLY, JOHN. This once courtly author, whom we have had occasion to censure for his affected innovation, and stilted elegance in prose composition, was, says Phillips, "a writer of several old-fashioned Comedies and Tragedies, which have been printed together

* Vide Reprint, 1809, p. 22.

† Vide Greene's *Groatsworth of Witte* bought with a Million of Repentance, reprint.

‡ Of the sweetness of versification and luxuriance of imagery which Peele occasionally exhibits, we shall quote an instance from "The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe. With the Tragedie of Absalon;" a play which Mr. *Hawkins* has re-printed in his *Origin of the Drama*, 3 vols.; observing, that the genius of Peele seems to have been kindled by reading the Prophets, and the Song of Solomon:—

Bethsabe. Come gentle Zephyr trick'd with those perfumes
That erst in Eden sweetened Adam's love,
And stroke my bosom with thy silken fan:
This shade (sun-proof) is yet no proof for thee,
Thy body smoother than this waveless spring,
And purer than the substance of the same,
Can creep through that his lances cannot pierce,
Thou and thy sister soft and sacred Air,
Goddess of life, and governess of health,
Keeps every fountain fresh and arbor sweet:
No brazen gate her passage can repulse,
Nor bushy thicket bar thy subtle breath.
Then deck thee with thy loose delightsome robes,
And on thy wings bring delicate perfumes,
To play the wantons with us through the leaves."

in a volume, and might perhaps when time was, be in very good request."*

The dramas here alluded to, but of which Phillips has given a defective and incorrect enumeration, are —

1. Alexander and Campaspe, 1584, 4to. Tragi-comedy.
2. Sappho and Phaon, 1584, 4to. Comedy.
3. Endimion, 1591, 4to. Comedy.
4. Galatea, 1592, 4to. Comedy.
5. Mydas, 1592, 4to. Comedy.
6. Mother Bombie, 1594, 4to. Comedy.
7. The Woman in the Moon, 1597, 4to. Comedy.
8. The Maid her Metamorphosis, 1600.
9. Love his Metamorphosis, 1601. 4to. Pastoral.

The volume mentioned by Phillips was published by Edward Blount in 1632, containing six of these pieces, to which he has affixed the title of "Sixe Court Comedies."

Notwithstanding the *encomia* of Mr. Blount, the genius of this "insufferable Elizabethan coxcomb," as he has been not unaptly called, was by no means calculated for dramatic effect. Epigrammatic wit, forced conceits, and pedantic allusion, are such bad substitutes for character and humour, that we cannot wonder if fatigue or insipidity should be the result of their employment. *Campaspe* has little interest, and no unity in its fable, and though termed a *tragi-comedy*, is written in prose; *Sappho and Phaon* has some beautiful passages, but is generally quaint and unnatural; *Endimion* has scarcely any thing to recommend it, and disgusts by its gross and fulsome flattery of Elizabeth; *Galatea* displays some luxuriant imagery, and *Phillida* and *Galatea* are not bad copies from the *Iphis* and *Ianthe* of Ovid; *Mydas* is partly a political production, and though void of interest, has more simplicity and purity both of thought and diction than is usual with this writer; *Mother Bombie* is altogether worthless

* *Theatrum Poetarum*, apud Brydges, pp. 199, 200.

in a dramatic light; *The Woman in the Moon* is little better; *The Maid her Metamorphosis*, the greater part of which is in verse, is one of the author's experiments for the refinement of our language, — an attempt which, if any where more peculiarly absurd, must be pronounced to be so on the stage; *Love his Metamorphosis*, of which the very title-page pronounces its condemnation, being designated as “A Wittie and Courtly Pastoral.” *

Though only two or three of Lilly's earlier dramas fall within the period allotted to this chapter, yet, in order to prevent a tiresome repetition of the subject, we have here enumerated the whole of his comedies; a plan that we shall pursue with regard to the remaining poets of this era.

It may be necessary to remark, that we must not estimate the poetical talents of Lilly from his failure as a dramatist; for in the *Lyric* department he has shown very superior abilities, whether we consider the freedom and melody of his versification, or the fancy and sentiment which he displays. His plays abound with songs alike admirable for their beauty, sweetness, and polish. †

Lilly, who had received an excellent classical education, and was a member of both the Universities, died about the year 1600.

15. HUGHES, THOMAS, the author of a singular old play, entitled “*The Misfortunes of Arthur* (Uther Pendragon's sonne) reduced into tragical notes by Thomas Hughes, one of the Societie of Graye's Inne.” 12mo. 1587.

In conformity with some prior examples, this production has an argument, a dumb show, and a chorus to each act; “it is beautifully printed in the black letter,” observes the editor of the *Biographia Dramatica*, “and has many cancels consisting of single words, half

* For these plays, Blount's republication being scarce, the reader may consult Dodsley's *Old Plays*, 1780; Hawkins's *Origin of the English Drama*; *Ancient British Drama* apud Walter Scott; and *Old Plays*, vols. 1 and 2. 8vo. 1814.

† Numerous specimens of these Songs, in case the dramas are not at hand, will be found in Ellis's *Specimens of the Early English Poets*, vol. ii.; and in Beloe's *Anecdotes of Literature and Scarce Books*, vol. ii.

lines, and entire speeches ; these were reprinted and pasted over the cancelled passages ; a practice, I believe, very rarely seen." * *Arthur* was performed before the Queen at Greenwich, on the 28th of February, and in the thirtieth year of her reign, and exhibits in its title-page a remarkable proof of the licence which actors at that time took in curtailing or enlarging the composition of the original author, informing us that the play " was set downe as it passed from under his (the poet's) hands, and as it was presented, *excepting certain words and lines, where some of the actors either helped their memories by brief omission, or fitted their acting by alteration.*" The writer appears to have been familiar with the Roman classics, but the rarity of his piece is much greater than its merit. †

16. KYD, THOMAS, to whom has been ascribed four plays, viz. : *Jeronimo ; The Spanish Tragedy ; Solyman and Perseda, and Cornelia.* Of these the first, which appeared on the stage about the year 1588, seems to have been given to Kyd, in consequence of his resuming the name and story in his Spanish tragedy ; it is a short piece not divided into acts and scenes, of little value, and was printed in 1605, under the title of "*The First Part of Jeronimo. With the Warres of Portugal, and the Life and Death of Don Andrea.*" 4to. ‡

" *The Spanish Tragedy, or, Hieronimo is mad again, Containing the lamentable end of Don Horatio and Belimperia. With the piti-full Death of Hieronimo,*" is supposed to have been first acted in 1588, or 1589, immediately following up the elder Jeronimo which had been well received.

Though this drama was an incessant object of ridicule to the contemporaries and immediate successors of its author, it nevertheless acquired great popularity, and long maintained possession of the stage. The consequence of this partiality was shown in a perversion

* *Biographia Dramatica*, vol. ii. p. 237.

† See a further account of this play, and a specimen of the chorus, in Beloe's *Anecdotes*, vol. i. p. 386.

‡ Vide *Ancient British Drama*, vol. i. p. 459.

of the public taste, for nothing can exceed the bombast and puerilities of this play and of those to which it gave almost instant birth. Kyd, in fact, whilst aspiring to the delineation of the most tremendous incidents, and the most uncontrolled passions, seems totally unconscious of his own imbecillity; and the result, therefore, has usually been, either unqualified horror, unmitigated disgust, or the most ludicrous emotion. There is neither symmetry, consistency, nor humanity, in the characters; they are beings not of this world, and the finest parts of the play, which occur in the fourth act, possess a tone of sorrow altogether wild and preternatural. The catastrophe is absurdly horrible.

Such were the attractions, however, of this sanguinary tragedy, that Ben Jonson, who, according to Decker, originally performed the character of Jeronimo, was employed by Mr. Henslow, in 1602, to give it a fresh claim on curiosity by his additions. *

"*The Tragedie of Solymán and Perseda*, wherein is laide open Love's Constancy, Fortune's Inconstancy, and Death's Triumphs," is conjectured by Mr. Hawkins to have been the production of † Kyd. Like *Jeronimo*, it is not divided into acts, and was entered on the stationers books in the same year with the *Spanish Tragedy*, a circumstance which leads us to suppose, that its date of performance was nearly contemporary with that production. Its style and manner, too, are such as assimilate it to the peculiar genius which breathes through the undisputed writings of the tragedian to whom it has been ascribed.

Cornelia, thus named when first published in 4to. 1594, but reprinted in 1595, under the enlarged title of "*Pompey the Great his Fair Cornelia's Tragedy*, effected by her Father and Husband's Downcast, Death, and Fortune," 4to. This play being merely a translation from the French of *Garnier*, and consequently an imitation of the ancients through a third or fourth medium, requires little

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 394. † Vol. ii. p. 197.

notice. The dialogue is in blank verse, and the choruses in various lyric metres.*

Kyd died, oppressed by poverty, about the year 1595.

17. MARLOWE, CHRISTOPHER, as an author, an object of great admiration and encomium in his own times, and, of all the dramatic poets who preceded Shakspeare, certainly the one who possessed the most genius. He was egregiously misled, however, by bad models, and his want of taste has condemned him, as a writer for the stage, to an obscurity from which he is not likely to emerge.

This "famous gracer of tragedians," as he is termed by Greene, in his *Groatsworth of Wit*, produced eight plays:—

1. *Tamburlaine the Great*, or the Scythian Shepherd. *Part the First*. 4to.

2. *Tamburlaine the Great*. *Part the Second*. 4to.

Of this tragedy, in two parts, which was brought on the stage about the year 1588, though not printed until 1590, it is impossible to speak without a mixture of wonder and contempt; for, whilst a few passages indicate talents of no common order, the residue is a tissue of unmingled rant, absurdity, and fustian: yet strange as it may appear, the most extravagant flights of this eccentric composition were the most popular, and numerous allusions to its moon-struck reveries, are to be found in the productions of its times. That it should be an object of ridicule to Shakspeare, and of quotation to Pistol, are alike in character.†

* "There is particularly remembered," remarks Phillips, "his tragedy *Cornelia*." *Theatrum Poetarum*, apud Brydges, p. 206.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xii. p. 92. *Henry the Fourth*, Part II., act ii. sc. 4.—The passage which Pistol has partially quoted will afford some idea of the wild and turgid extravagances of this poet. *Tamburlaine* is represented in a chariot drawn by captive monarchs with bits in their mouths; and, holding the reins in his left hand, he is in the act of scourging them with a whip:—

"*Tamb.* Holla ye pamper'd jades of Asia:
What, can ye draw but twenty miles a day,
And have so proud a chariot at your heels,
And such a coachman as great *Tamburlaine*?

Edward the Second is a proof, that, when Marlowe chose to drop the barbarities of his age, and the bombast of "King Cambyse's Vein," he could exert an influence over the heart which has not often been excelled. There is a truth, simplicity, and moral feeling in this play which irresistibly attracts, and would fain induce us to hope, that its author could not have exhibited the impious and abandoned traits of character which have usually been attributed to him. The death-scene of Edward is a master-piece of pity and terror.

5. "*The Massacre of Paris*, with the Death of the Duke of Guise. 8vo." A subject congenial with the general cast of Marlowe's gloomy and ferocious style of colouring, nor is it deficient in his wonted accumulation of horrors. It possesses, however, a few good scenes, and may be classed midway between the author's worst and best productions.

6. *The Rich Jew of Malta*, 4to. The prejudice against the Jews, during the reign of Elizabeth, was excessive; none were suffered to reside in the kingdom, and every art encouraged that could stimulate the hatred of the people against this persecuted race. No engine was better calculated for this purpose than the stage, and no characters were ever more relished, or more malignantly enjoyed, than the *Barabas* of Marlowe, and the *Shylock* of Shakspeare. The distance, however, between them, as well with regard to truth of delineation, as to poetical vigour of conception, is infinite; for whilst the Jew of Marlowe can be considered in no other light than as the mere incarnation of a fiend, that of Shakspeare possesses, with all his ferocity and cruelty, such a touch of humanity as classes him distinctly with his species, and renders him, if not a very probable, yet a very possible being.

7. "*The Tragical Historie of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*." 4to. This, in point of preternatural wildness, and metaphysical horror, is the *chef d'œuvre* of Marlowe. It unfolds not only genius of a sublimated and exotic cast, but seems to have been the product of a mind inflamed by unhallowed curiosity, and an eager irreligious desire of invading the secrets of another world, and so far gives credence to

the imputations which have stained the memory of its author; for this play breathes not a poetic preternaturalism, if we may use the expression, but looks like the creature of an atmosphere emerging from the gulph of lawless spirits, and vainly employed in pursuing the corruscations which traverse its illimitable gloom.

The catastrophe of this play makes the heart shudder, and the hair involuntarily start erect; and the agonies of Faustus on the fast-approaching expiration of his compact with the Devil, are depicted with a strength truly appalling.

Yet amidst all this diabolism, there occasionally occur passages of great moral sublimity, passages on which Milton seems to have fixed his eye. Thus, the reply of the Demon *Mephostophilis* to the enquiry of Faustus, concerning the locality of Hell, bears a striking analogy to the descriptions of Satan's internal and ever-present torments at the commencement of the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*. "Tell me," exclaims the daring necromancer, "where is the place that men call Hell?"

"*Mephostophilis.* Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed
In one self place; but *where we are is hell,*
And where hell is, there we must ever be,
And, to be short, when all the world dissolves,
And every creature shall be purified,
All places shall be hell that are not heaven."

8. *The Tragedie of Dido, Queene of Carthage.* — This drama was written in conjunction with Thomas Nash, and printed in 1594. *

Marlowe has been lavishly panegyrised by Jonson, Heywood, Drayton, Peele, Meres, Nash, &c.; but by none so emphatically as by Phillips, who, at the very opening of his article on this poet, calls him "a kind of a second Shakspeare." This seems, however, to have been done rather with a reference to the similarities arising from his having, like Shakspeare, been actor, player, and author of a poem on

* This rare play was purchased, at the Roxburgh sale, for seventeen guineas!

a congenial subject with Venus and Adonis, namely, his Hero and Leander, than from any approximation in the value of their dramatic works. *

The death of Marlowe, which took place before the year 1593, was violent and premature, the melancholy termination of a life rendered still more melancholy by vice and infidelity. †

18. LODGE, THOMAS. Two dramatic pieces have issued from the pen of this elegant miscellaneous poet. Of these the first was written in conjunction with Robert Greene, and entitled *A Looking-Glass for London and England*, a tragi-comedy, acted in 1591 ‡, though not published until 1598. The second is called "*The Wounds of Civil War*. Lively set forth in the true tragedies of Marius and Scilla," and probably performed in the year following the representation of the former play. It was printed in 1594. These dramas, though not the best of Dr. Lodge's productions, were not unpopular, nor deemed unworthy of his talents; the *Looking-Glass* appears to have been acted four times at the Rose theatre, in about the space of fifteen months.

19. GREENE, ROBERT. This pleasing, but unfortunate poet, was the author of six plays, independent of that which he wrote as the coadjutor of Lodge. 1. "*The Honorable Historie of Frier Bacon and Frier Bongay*." 4to. As Greene died in September, 1592, there can

* *Theatrum Poetarum*, apud Brydges, p. 113.

† Two accounts, varying materially, have been given by Wood and Vaughan, of this poet's untimely fate. That by Vaughan as being little known, and apparently founded on the writer's own knowledge of the fact, I shall venture to transcribe. The *Golden Grove*, from which it is extracted, was first published in 1600. Relating God's judgments on Atheists, he adds: —

"Not inferiour to these was one Christopher Marlow, by profession a play-maker, who, as it is reported, about fourteen yeres a-goe, wrote a booke against the Trinitie: but see the effects of God's justice; it so hapned, that at Detford, a litle village, about three miles distant from London, as he meant to stab with his poynard one named Ingram, that had invited him thither to a feaste, and was then playing at tables; hee perceyuing it, so avoyded the thrust, that withall drawing out his dagger for his defence, he stab'd this Marlow into the eye, in such sort, that his braynes comming out at the dagger's point, hee shortly after dyed."

‡ Vide Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. iii. p. 355.

be no doubt that all his dramas were written, if not all performed, before Shakspeare's commencement as a writer for the stage; we find, from Henslowe's List, that *Frier Bacon* was performed at the Rose theatre, in February, 1591, and repeated thrice in the course of the season*; it was printed in 1594, and being founded on a popular story, had considerable success. 2. "*The Historie of Orlando Furioso*, one of the twelve Peers of France." This piece was likewise performed at the same theatre, in February, 1591, and also printed in 1594; the fable is taken, with little or no alteration, from the Orlando of Ariosto. 3. "*The Scottish Historie of James the Fourth, slaine at Flodden*. Entermixed with a pleasant Comedie presented by *Oboram* King of the Fayeries." Greene, says Oldys, in plotting plays, was his craft's master, and it would be curious and interesting to ascertain how he has conducted a subject which has obtained so much celebrity in our own days, and more especially in what manner he has combined it with the romantic superstition attendant on Oberon and his fairies. † 4. "*The Comicall Historie of Alphonsus, King of Arragon*." 5. "*The History of Jobe*." This play, which was never printed, and it is supposed never performed, although it was entered on the Stationers' books, in 1594, was unfortunately, with many others, destroyed by the carelessness of Dr. Warburton's servant. 6. "*Fair Emm*, the Miller's Daughter of Manchester, with the Love of William the Conqueror," a comedy which has been ascribed to Greene, by Phillips and Winstanley; the former, after enumerating some pieces which upon no good grounds

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 354.

† Berkenhout's Biographia Literaria, p. 319. note.—The only account which I have seen of this play, printed in 1598, is in a note by Mr. Malone, who tells us that Shakspeare does not appear to have been indebted to this piece. "The plan of it," he adds, "is shortly this: Bohan, a Scot, in consequence of being disgusted with the world, having retired to a tomb where he has fixed his dwelling, is met by Aster Oberon, king of the fairies, who entertains him with an antick or dance by his subjects. These two personages, after some conversation, determine to listen to a tragedy, which is acted before them, and to which they make a kind of chorus, by moralizing at the end of each act." Vol. ii. p. 250.

had been attributed to the joint pens of our author and Dr. Lodge, adds, "besides which, he wrote alone the comedies of Friar Bacon and *Fair Emme*."* It is the more probable that this drama was the composition of Greene, as it was represented at the same theatre and by the same company which brought forward his avowed productions.

We must, with Ritson, express our regret, that the dramatic works of Greene have not hitherto been collected and published together. †

20. LEGGE, THOMAS, twice vice-chancellor of Cambridge, and the author of two plays which, though never printed, were acted with great applause, not only in the University which gave them birth, but on the public theatres. The first of these is named *The Destruction of Jerusalem*, and appears from Henslowe's List to have been performed at the Rose theatre, on the 22d of March, 1591; the second is entitled, *The Life of King Richard the Third*, a subject which induces us to regret, that it should not have been submitted to the press, especially when the character of Legge for dramatic talent is considered; for Meres informs us in 1598, that "Doctor Leg of Cambridge" was esteemed among the "best for tragedie," adding, that "as M. Anneus Lucanus writ two excellent tragedies, one called *Medea*, the other *de Incendio Troiæ cum Priami calamitate*: so Doctor Leg hath penned two *famous* tragedies, y^e one of Richard the 3, the other of the destruction of Jerusalem." ‡ The death of Dr. Legge took place in July, 1607.

To this catalogue of dramatic writers who preceded Shakspeare, it will be necessary to annex the names, at least, of those *anonymous* plays which, as far as any record of their performance has reached us, were the property of the stage anterior to the year 1594, under the almost certain presumption, that they must have been written before Shakspeare had acquired any celebrity as a theatrical poet.

* *Theatrum Poetarum* apud Brydges, p. 193.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. p. 37.

‡ *Vide Censura Literaria*, vol. ix. p. 98.

These, with the exception of the plays ascribed to Shakspeare, a few Interludes and Moralities, the tragi-comedy of *Appius and Virginia*, printed in 1576, and the tragedy of *Selimus, Emperor of the Turks*, must, and perhaps without danger of any very important omission, be limited to the following enumeration of dramas performed at the Rose theatre during the years 1591, 1592, and 1593; from which, however, we have withdrawn all those pieces that may be found previously noticed under the names of their respective authors :—

1. Muly Mulocco, or the Battle of Alcazar *	-	1591.
2. Spanish Comedy of Don Horatio,	-	—
3. Sir John Mandeville,	-	—
4. Henry of Cornwall,	-	—
5. Chloris and Orgasto †,	-	—
6. Pope Joan,	-	—
7. Machiavel,	-	—
8. Ricardo ‡,	-	—
9. Four Plays in One,	-	—
10. Zenobia,	-	—
11. Constantine,	-	—
12. Brandymer,	-	—
13. Titus Vespasian	-	—
14. The Tanner of Denmark,	-	1592.
15. Julian of Brentford,	-	—
16. The Comedy of Cosmo,	-	—
17. God Speed the Plough,	-	1593.

* This play was printed in 1594, and has fallen under the ridicule of Shakspeare, in a parody on the words, *Feed and be fat*, &c.

† The miserable orthography of this catalogue has frequently disguised the real titles so much as to render them almost unintelligible, and I suspect *Orgasto* in this place to be very remote from the genuine word.

‡ Called in one part of the list, “bendo and Ricardo,” and in another, “Byndo and Ricardo.”

18. Huon of Bourdeaux, 1593.
19. George a Green *, - - - - -
20. Buckingham, - - - - -
21. Richard the Confessor, - - - - -
22. William the Conqueror, - - - - -
23. Friar Francis, - - - - -
24. The Pinner of Wakefield †, - - - - -
25. Abraham and Lot, - - - - -
26. The Fair Maid of Italy, - - - - -
27. King Lud, - - - - -
28. The Ranger's Comedy ‡, - - - - -

In order accurately to ascertain how far Shakspeare might be indebted to his predecessors, it would be highly desirable to possess a printed collection of all the dramas which are yet within the reach of the press, from the days of Sackville, to the year 1591. Such a work, so far from diminishing the claim to originality with which this great poet is now invested, would, we are convinced, place it in a still more indisputable point of view; and merely prove, that, without any servility of imitation, or even the smallest dereliction of his native talent and creative genius, he had absorbed within his own refulgent sphere the few feeble lights which, previous to his appearance, had shed a kind of twilight over the dramatic world.

The models, indeed, if such they may be called, which were presented to his view, are, as far as we are acquainted with them, so grossly defective in structure, style, and sentiment, that, if we set aside two or three examples, little or nothing could be learned from

* This, being the prior part of the title of the Pinner of Wakefield, mentioned below, is probably one and the same with that production.

† The Pinner of Wakefield, which is in Dodsley's Collection, and in Scott's Ancient British Drama, was printed in 1599.

‡ Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. pp. 354—358.—Mr. Malone observes of the play in this catalogue, called "Richard the Confessor," that it "should seem to have been written by the Tinker, in *Taming of the Shrew*, who talks of *Richard Conqueror*."

them. In the course of near thirty years which elapsed between Sackville and Shakspeare, the best and purest period was perhaps that which immediately succeeded the exhibition of *Gorboduc*, but which was speedily terminated by the appearance of Preston's *Cambyzes* in or probably rather before the year 1570. From this era we behold a succession of playwrights who, for better than twenty years, deluged the stage as tragic poets with a torrent of bombastic and sanguinary fiction, alike disgraceful to the feelings of humanity and common sense; or as comic writers, overwhelmed us with a mass of quaintness, buffoonery, and affectation. The worthy disciples of the author of *Cambyzes*, *Whetstone*, *Peele*, *Lilly*, *Kydd*, and *Marlowe*, seem to have racked their brains to produce what was unnatural and atrocious, and having, like their leader, received a classical education, misemployed it to clothe their conceptions in a scholastic, uniform, and monotonous garb, as far, at least, as a versification modulated with the most undeviating regularity, and destitute of all variety of cadence or of pause could minister to such an effect.

That so dark a picture should occasionally be relieved by gleams of light, which appear the more brilliant from the surrounding contrast, was naturally to be expected; and we have accordingly seen that the very poets who may justly be censured for their general mode of execution, for the wildness and extravagancy of their plots, now and then present us with lines, passages, and even scenes, remarkable for their beauty, strength, or poetical diction; but these, so unconnected are they, and apart from the customary tone and keeping of the pieces in which they are scattered, appear rather as the fortuitous irradiation of a meteor, whose momentary splendour serves but to render the returning gloom more heavy and oppressive, than the effect of that sober, steady, and improving light which might cheer us with the prospect of approaching day.

Of the twenty poets who have just passed in review before us, Marlowe certainly exhibits the greatest portion of genius, though debased with a large admixture of the gross and glaring faults of his contemporaries. Two of his productions may yet be read with

interest ; his *Edward the Second*, and his *Faustus* ; though the latter must be allowed to deviate from the true tract of tragedy, in presenting us rather with what is horrible than terrible in its incidents and catastrophe.

We must not be surprised, therefore, that the dramatic fabrics of these rude artists should have met with the warmest admiration, when we recollect, that, in the infancy of an art, novelty is of itself abundantly productive of attraction, and that taste, neither formed by good models, nor rendered fastidious by choice, can have little power to check the march of misguided enthusiasm.

It is necessary, however, to record an event in dramatic history, which, coming into operation just previous to the entrance of our poet into the theatric arena as an author, no doubt contributed powerfully not only to chasten his muse, but, through him, universally the national taste. In 1589 commissioners were appointed by the Queen for the purpose of reviewing and revising the productions of all writers for the stage, with full powers to reject and strike out all which they might deem unmannerly, licentious, and irreverent ; a censure which, it is evident, if properly and temperately executed, could not fail of conferring almost incalculable benefit on a department of literature at that time not much advanced in its career, and but too apt to transgress the limits of a just decorum.

This regulation ushers in, indeed, by many degrees the most important period in the annals of our theatre, when Shakspeare, starting into dramatic life, came boldly forward on the eye, leaving at an immeasurable distance behind him, and in groupes more or less darkly shaded, his immediate predecessors, and his earliest contemporaries in the art.

CHAPTER IX.

PERIOD OF SHAKSPEARE'S COMMENCEMENT AS A DRAMATIC POET—CHRONOLOGICAL ARRANGEMENT OF HIS GENUINE PLAYS—OBSERVATIONS ON *PERICLES*; ON THE *COMEDY OF ERRORS*; ON *LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST*; ON *HENRY THE SIXTH, PART THE FIRST*; ON *HENRY THE SIXTH, PART THE SECOND*, AND ON *A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM*—DISSERTATION ON THE FAIRY MYTHOLOGY, AND ON THE MODIFICATIONS WHICH IT RECEIVED FROM THE GENIUS OF SHAKSPEARE.

WE have, in a former portion of this work *, assigned our reasons for concluding that, on Shakspeare's arrival in London, about the year 1586 or 1587, his *immediate* employment was that of an actor; and we now proceed to consider the much agitated question as to the era of his *first* attempts in *dramatic* poetry. That this was subsequent to the production of his *Venus and Adonis*, we possess his own authority, when he informs us that the poem just mentioned was *the first heir of his invention*; and though we enjoy no testimony of a like kind, or emanating from a similar source, as to the period of his earliest effort in dramatic literature, yet, if we be correct in referring the composition of his *Venus and Adonis* to the interval elapsing between the years 1587 and 1590 †, the epoch of his *first play* cannot, with any probability, be placed either much anterior or subsequent to the year 1590. That it occurred *not* before this date, may be presumed from recollecting, that, in the first place, the *prosecution* of his amatory poem and the *acquirement* of his profession as an actor, might be sufficient to occupy an interval of two years; and, in the second place, that no contemporary previous to 1592, neither Webbe in 1586 ‡, nor Puttenham in 1589 §, nor Harrington in February,

* Part II. chapter 1.

† In his Discourse on English Poetry.

‡ Part II. chapter 2.

§ In his Art of English Poesy.

1591*, has noticed or even alluded to any theatrical production of our author.

That it took place, either in 1590, or very soon after that year, must be inferred both from tradition, and from written testimony. Aubery tells us, from the former source, that "he began *early* to make essays in *dramatique poetry*, which at that time was very lowe, and his plays took well †;" and from the nature and extent of the allusions in the following passage from Robert Greene's *Groatsworth of Witte bought with a Million of Repentance*, there can be no doubt that, not only one play, but that several had been written and prepared for the stage by our poet, anterior to September, 1592.

It appears that this tract of Greene's was completed a very short time previous to his death, which happened on the third of the month of the year just mentioned, and that Henry Chettle, "upon whose *perill*" ‡ it had been entered in the Stationers' register on September the 20th, 1592, became editor and publisher of it before the ensuing December. §

Greene had been the intimate associate of *Marlowe*, *Lodge*, and *Peele*, and he concludes his *Groatsworth of Witte* with an address to these bards, the object of which is, to dissuade them from any further reliance on the stage for support, and to warn them against the ingratitude and selfishness of players: "trust them not;" he exclaims, "for there is an *upstart crowe* BEAUTIFIED WITH OUR FEATHERS, that with his *tygres heart wrapt in a player's hide*, supposes hee is as well able to bombaste out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute JOHANNES FAC-TOTUM, is in his own conceit the only SHAKE-SCENE in a countrey." ||

To Mr. Tyrwhit we are indebted for the first application of this

* In his *Apology for Poetry*.

† Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. iii. p. 213.

‡ Vide Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. ii. p. 236; and Chalmers's *Supplemental Apology*, p. 272. note.

§ Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. ii. p. 237.

|| Ibid. vol. xiv. p. 217.

passage to Shakspeare, who, as might naturally be expected, feeling himself hurt at Greene's unmerited sarcasm, clearly pointing to him by the designation of *the only Shake-scene in a country*, and not well pleased with Chettle's officious publication of it, expressed his sentiments so openly as to draw forth from the repentant editor, about three months after his edition of the *Groatsworth of Witte*, an apology, which adds further weight to the inferences which we wish to deduce from the language of Greene. In this interesting little pamphlet which, under the title of *Kind Harts Dreame*, we have had occasion to quote more at large in an earlier part of the volume*, the author, after slightly noticing Marlowe, one of the offended parties, and speaking highly of the demeanour, professional ability, and moral integrity of Shakspeare, closes the sentence and the eulogium by mentioning "HIS FACETIOUS GRACE OF WRITING, THAT APPROVES HIS ART."

From these passages in Greene and Chettle, combined with the traditionary relation of Aubrey, we may legitimately infer, first, that *he had written for the stage before the year 1592*; secondly, that *he had written during this period with considerable success*, for Aubrey tells us, that *his plays took well*, and Chettle that *his grace in writing approved his art*; thirdly, that *he had written both tragedy and comedy*, Greene reporting, that he was *well able to bombast out a blank verse*, and Chettle speaking of his "*facetious grace in writing*;" fourthly, that *he had altered and brought on the stage some of the separate or joint productions of Marlowe, Greene, Lodge, and Peele*; the words of Greene, where he terms Shakspeare a "*crowe beautified with our feathers, that with his tygres heart wrapt in a player's hide, supposes,*" &c. implying, not only that he had furtively acquired fame by appropriating their productions, but referring to a particular play, through the medium of quotation, as a proof of the assertion, the words *tygres heart wrapt in a player's hide* being a parody of a line in the *Third*

* Part II. chap. 1.

Part of King Henry the Sixth : or what we, for reasons which will be speedily assigned, have thought proper to call the *Second Part*,—

“ O, tiger’s heart, wrapp’d in a woman’s hide ;” *

fifthly, *that he had already excited, as the usual consequence of success, no small degree of jealousy and envy* ; hence Greene has querelously bestowed upon him the appellation of *upstart*, and has taxed him with a monopolising spirit, an accusation which leads us to believe, sixthly, *that he had written or prepared for the stage SEVERAL PLAYS anterior to September, 1592* ; this last inference, which we conceive to be fairly deduced from the description of our poet as AN ABSOLUTE JOHANNES FAC-TOTUM with regard to the stage, will immediately bring forward again the question as to the precise era of our author’s earliest drama.

Now to warrant the charge implied by the expression, *an absolute fac-totum*, we must necessarily allow a sufficient lapse of time before September, 1592, in order to admit, not only of Shakspeare’s altering a play for the stage, but of his composing either altogether, or in part, both *tragedy* and *comedy* on a basis of his own choice, so that he might, as he actually did, appear to Greene, in the capacities of *corrector*, *improver*, and *original writer* of plays, to be a perfect *fac-totum*.

And, if we further reflect, that the composition of the *Groatsworth of Witte* most probably, from indisposition, occupied its author one month, as he complains of *weakness scarce suffering him to write* towards the conclusion of his tract, and that we cannot reasonably conclude less than *two years* to have been employed by Shakspeare in the execution of the functions assigned him by Greene ; the period for the production of his first drama, will necessarily be thrown back to the August of the year 1590 ; an era to which no objection, from contradictory testimony, can with any show of probability apply ; for,

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xiv. p. 43. Act i. sc. 4.

though Harrington, whose *Apologie for Poetrie* was entered on the Stationers' books in February, 1591, has not noticed Shakspeare, yet, if we consider that this treatise was, in all likelihood, completed previous to the close of 1590, we shall not wonder that a play, performed but three or four months before the critic finished his labours, unappropriated too, there is reason to think, by the public at that time, and unacknowledged by the author, should be passed over in silence.

Having thus endeavoured to fix the era of our poet's commencement as a dramatic writer, it remains to ascertain which was the *first drama* that, either *wholly* or in *great part*, issued from his pen; a subject, like the former, certainly surrounded with many difficulties, liable to many errors, and only to be illustrated by a patient investigation of, and a well-weighed deduction from, minute circumstances and conflicting probabilities.

The reasons which have induced us to fix upon PERICLES, as the result of a laborious, if not a successful, enquiry, will be offered, with much diffidence, under the first article of the following Chronological Arrangement, which, though deviating, in several instances, from the chronologies of both Chalmers and Malone, will not, it is hoped, on that account be found needlessly singular, nor unproductive of a closer approximation to probability, and, perchance, to truth.

For the sake of perspicuity, it has been thought eligible to prefix, in a tabular form, the *order* which has been adopted, the observations confirmatory of its arrangement being classed according to the series thus drawn out; and here it may be necessary to premise, that the substance of our commentary, with the exception of what may be requisite to establish a few new dates, will be chiefly confined to critical remarks on each play, relieved by intervening dissertations on the super-human agency of the poet.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

1. Pericles,	- - - - -	1590.
2. Comedy of Errors,	- - - - -	1591.
3. Love's Labour's Lost,	- - - - -	1591.
4. King Henry the Sixth, Part I.	- - - - -	1592.
5. King Henry the Sixth, Part II.	- - - - -	1592.
6. Midsummer-Night's Dream,	- - - - -	1593.
7. Romeo and Juliet,	- - - - -	1593.
8. Taming of the Shrew,	- - - - -	1594.
9. Two Gentlemen of Verona,	- - - - -	1595.
10. King Richard the Third,	- - - - -	1595.
11. King Richard the Second,	- - - - -	1596.
12. King Henry the Fourth, Part I.	- - - - -	1596.
13. King Henry the Fourth, Part II.	- - - - -	1596.
14. The Merchant of Venice,	- - - - -	1597.
15. Hamlet,	- - - - -	1597.
16. King John,	- - - - -	1598.
17. All's Well That Ends Well,	- - - - -	1598.
18. King Henry the Fifth,	- - - - -	1599.
19. Much Ado About Nothing,	- - - - -	1599.
20. As You Like It,	- - - - -	1600.
21. Merry Wives of Windsor,	- - - - -	1601.
22. Troilus and Cressida,	- - - - -	1601.
23. King Henry the Eighth,	- - - - -	1602.
24. Timon of Athens,	- - - - -	1602.
25. Measure for Measure,	- - - - -	1603.
26. King Lear,	- - - - -	1604.
27. Cymbeline,	- - - - -	1605.
28. Macbeth,	- - - - -	1606.
29. Julius Cæsar,	- - - - -	1607.
30. Antony and Cleopatra,	- - - - -	1608.

31. Coriolanus, - - - - - 1609.
32. The Winter's Tale, - - - - - 1610.
33. The Tempest, - - - - - 1611.
34. Othello, - - - - - 1612.
35. Twelfth Night, - - - - - 1613.

1. PERICLES, 1590. That the *greater part*, if not the whole, of this drama, was the *composition of Shakspeare*, and that it is to be considered as his *earliest* dramatic effort, are positions, of which the first has been rendered highly probable by the elaborate disquisitions of Messrs. Steevens and Malone, and may possibly be placed in a still clearer point of view by a more condensed and lucid arrangement of the testimony already produced, and by a further discussion of the merits and peculiarities of the play itself; while the second will, we trust, receive additional support by inferences legitimately deduced from a comprehensive survey of scattered and hitherto insulated premises.

The evidence required for the establishment of a high degree of probability under the first of these positions necessarily divides itself into two parts; the *external* and the *internal* evidence. The former commences with the original edition of *Pericles*, which was entered on the Stationers' books by Edward Blount, one of the printers of the first folio edition of Shakspeare's plays, on the 20th of May *, 1608, but did not pass the press until the subsequent year, when it was published, not, as might have been expected, by Blount, but by one Henry Gosson, who placed Shakspeare's name at full length in the title-page.

* "20th May, 1608.

"Edw. Blunt] Entered under t'hands of Sir Geo. Bucke, Kt. and Mr. Warden Seton, a book called: The booke of *Pericles Prynce of Tyre*."

"A book by the like authoritie, called *Anthony and Cleopatra*." Chalmers's Supplemental Apology, pp. 488, 489. By a somewhat singular mistake, the *second* of May is mentioned by Mr. Malone, as the date of the entry of *Pericles*; vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. p. 147.

It is worthy of remark, also, that this edition was entered at Stationers' Hall together with *Antony and Cleopatra*, and that it, and the three following editions, which were also in quarto, were styled in the title-page, *the much admired play of Pericles*. As the entry, however, was by Blount, and the edition by Gosson, it is probable, as Mr. Malone has remarked, that the former had been anticipated by the latter, through the procurance of a play-house copy.* It may also be added, that *Pericles* was performed at Shakspeare's own theatre, *The Globe*. The next ascription of this play to our author, is found in a poem entitled *The Times Displayed in Six Sestiyads*, by S. Sheppard, 4to. 1646, dedicated to Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and containing, in the ninth stanza of the sixth Sestiad, a positive assertion of Shakspeare's property in this drama:—

“ See him whose tragick sceans Euripides
Doth equal, and with Sophocles we may
Compare great *Shakspear*; Aristophanes
Never like him his fancy could display,
Witness the *Prince of Tyre*, his *Pericles*.” †

This high eulogium on *Pericles* received a direct contradiction very shortly afterwards from the pen of an obscure poet named Tatham, who bears, however, an equally strong testimony as to Shakspeare being the author of the piece, which he thus presumes to censure:—

“ But Shakespeare, the plebeian driller, was
Founder'd in his *Pericles*, and must not pass.” ‡

To these testimonies in 1646 and 1652, full and unqualified, and made at no distant period from the death of the bard to whom they relate, we have to add the still more forcible and striking declaration

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. p. 148. The four quarto editions of *Pericles* are dated, 1609, 1619, 1630, and 1635.

† British Bibliographer, vol. i. p. 533.

‡ Verses by J. Tatham, prefixed to Richard Brome's *Jovial Crew or the Merry Beggars*, 4to. 1652.

of Dryden, who tells us, in 1677, and in words as strong and as decisive as he could select, that

“ Shakspeare's own muse, his *Pericles* first bore.” *

The only drawback on this accumulation of external evidence is the omission of *Pericles* in the first edition of our author's works ; a negative fact which can have little weight when we recollect, that both the memory and judgment of Heminge and Condell, the poet's editors, were so defective, that they had *forgotten Troilus and Cressida*, until the entire folio and the table of contents had been printed, and admitted *Titus Andronicus*, and the *Historical Play of King Henry the Sixth*, probably for no other reasons, than that the former had been, from its unmerited popularity, brought forward by Shakspeare on his own theatre, though, there is sufficient internal evidence to prove, without the addition of a single line ; and because the latter, with a similar predilection of the lower orders in its favour, had, on that account, obtained a similar, though not a more laboured attention from our poet, and was therefore deemed by his editors, though very unnecessarily, a requisite introduction to the two plays on the reign of that monarch which Shakspeare had really new-modelled.

It cannot, consequently, be surprising that, as they had forgotten *Troilus and Cressida* until the folio had been printed, they should have also forgotten *Pericles* until the same folio had been in circulation, and when it was too late to correct the omission ; an error which the second folio has, without doubt or examination, blindly copied.

If the external evidence in support of Shakspeare being the author of the greater part of this play be striking, the *internal* must be pronounced still more so, and, indeed, absolutely decisive of the question ; for, whether we consider the style and phraseology, or the

* Prologue to the tragedie of *Circe*, by Charles D'Avenant, 1677.

imagery, sentiment, and humour, the approximation to our author's uncontested dramas appears so close, frequent, and peculiar, as to stamp irresistible conviction on the mind.

The result has accordingly been such as might have been predicted under the assumption of the play being genuine; for the more it has been examined, the more clearly has Shakspeare's large property in it been established. It is curious, indeed, to note the increased tone of confidence which each successive commentator has assumed in proportion as he has weighed the testimony arising from the piece itself. *Rowe*, in his first edition, says, "it is *owned* that some part of *Pericles* certainly was written by him, particularly the last act;" *Dr. Farmer* observes that the hand of Shakspeare may be *seen* in the latter part of the play; *Dr. Percy* remarks, that "more of the phraseology used in the genuine dramas of Shakspeare prevails in *Pericles*, than in any of the other six doubted plays*," and, of the two rival restorers of this drama, *Steevens* and *Malone*, the former declares; — "I admit without reserve that Shakspeare,

——— "whose hopeful colours
Advance a half-fac'd sun, striving to shine,"

is visible in *many scenes throughout the play*; — the *purpurei panni* are Shakspeare's, and the rest the productions of some inglorious and forgotten play-wright;" — adding, in a subsequent paragraph, that *Pericles* is valuable, "as the engravings of *Mark Antonio* are valuable not only on account of their beauty, but because they are supposed to have been executed under the eye of *Raffaello*†;" while the latter gives it as his corrected opinion, that "the congenial sentiments, the numerous expressions bearing a striking similitude to passages in his undisputed plays, some of the incidents, the situation of many of the persons, and in various places the colour of the style, all these combine to set the seal of Shakspeare on the play before us, and

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. p. 389. † Ibid. p. 403. 404. 411.

furnish us with internal and irresistible proofs, that a considerable portion of this piece, as it now appears, was written by him. The greater part of the three last acts may, I think, on this ground be safely ascribed to him; and his hand may be traced occasionally in the other two divisions." * Lastly, Mr. Douce asserts, that "many will be of opinion that it contains more that *he might have written* than either *Love's Labour's Lost*, or *All's Well that Ends Well*." †

For satisfactory proof that the style, phraseology, and imagery of the greater part of this play are truly Shakspearean, the reader is referred to the commentators, who have noticed, with unwearied accuracy, all the numerous coincidences which, in these respects, occur between *Pericles* and the poet's subsequent productions; similitudes so striking, as to leave no doubt that they originated from one and the same source.

If we attend, however, a little further to the *dramatic construction* of *Pericles*, to its *humour*, *sentiment*, and *character*, not only shall we find additional evidence in favour of its being, in a great degree, the product of our author, but fresh cause, it is expected, for awarding it a higher estimation than it has hitherto obtained.

However wild and extravagant the fable of *Pericles* may appear, if we consider its numerous chorusses, its pageantry, and dumb shows, its continual succession of incidents, and the great length of time which they occupy, yet is it, we may venture to assert, the most spirited and pleasing specimen of the nature and fabric of our earliest romantic drama which we possess, and the more valuable, as it is the only one with which Shakspeare has favoured us. We should therefore welcome this play, an admirable example of "the neglected favourites of our ancestors, with something of the same feeling that is experienced in the reception of an old and valued friend of our fathers or grandfathers. Nay, we should like "it" the better for "its" gothic appendages of pageants and chorusses, to explain the

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. p. 390.

† Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 144.

intricacies of the fable ; and we can see no objection to the dramatic representation even of a series of ages in a single night, that does not apply to every description of poem which leads in perusal from the fire-side at which we are sitting, to a succession of remote periods and distant countries. In these matters, faith is all-powerful ; and, without her influence, the most chastely cold and critically correct of dramas is precisely as unreal as the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, or the *Winter's Tale*." *

Perfectly coinciding in opinion with this ingenious critic, and willing to give an indefinite influence to the illusion of the scene, we have found in *Pericles* much entertainment from its uncommon variety and rapidity of incident, qualities which peculiarly mark the genius of Shakspeare, and which rendered this drama so successful on its first appearance, that the poets of the time quote its reception as a remarkable instance of popularity. †

A still more powerful attraction in *Pericles* is, that the interest accumulates as the story proceeds ; for, though many of the characters in the earlier part of the piece, such as *Antiochus* and his *Daughter*, *Simonides* and *Thaisa*, *Cleon* and *Dionyza*, disappear and drop into oblivion, their places are supplied by more pleasing and efficient agents, who are not only less fugacious, but better calculated for theatric effect. The inequalities of this production are, indeed, considerable, and only to be accounted for, with probability, on the supposition, that Shakspeare either accepted a coadjutor, or improved on the rough sketch of a previous writer ; the former, for reasons which will be assigned hereafter, seems entitled to a preference, and will explain why, in compliment to his dramatic friend, he has suffered a few passages, and one entire scene, of a character totally

* Monthly Review, New Series, vol. lxxvii. p. 158.

† Thus, in the prologue to a comedy entitled *The Hog has lost his Pearl*, 1614, the author, alluding to his own production, says,

——— " if it prove so happy as to please,
Well say, 'tis fortunate, like *Pericles*."

dissimilar to his own style and mode of composition, to stand uncorrected; for who does not perceive that of the closing scene of the second act, not a sentence or a word escaped from the pen of Shakspeare, and yet, that the omission of a few lines would have rendered that blameless and consistent, which is now, with reference to the character of Simonides, a tissue of imbecillity, absurdity, and falsehood. *

* As this is the only scene in the play which disgusts from its *total dereliction of nature*, a result at once decisive as to Shakspeare having no property in it; and as the mere *omission* of a few lines, not a word being either added or altered, will be sufficient to render the whole probable and inoffensive, I cannot avoid wishing that such curtailment might be adopted in every future edition.

SCENE V.

PENTAPOLIS. *A Room in the Palace.*

Enter SIMONIDES and the KNIGHTS: SIMONIDES reading a letter.

Knights. May we not get access to her, my lord?

Sim. 'Faith, by no means; it is impossible.

Knights. Though loath to bid farewell, we take our leaves. *(Exeunt.*

Sim. So —

They're well dispatch'd; now to my daughter's letter:

She tells me here, she'll wed the stranger knight;

Well, I commend her choice;

And will no longer have it be delay'd.

Soft, here he comes: — I must dissemble it.

Enter PERICLES.

Per. All fortune to the good Simonides!

Sim. To you as much, sir! I am beholden to you,

For your sweet musick this last night: my ears,

I do protest, were never better fed

With such delightful pleasing harmony.

Per. It is your grace's pleasure to commend;

Not my desert.

Sim. Sir, you are musick's master.

Per. The worst of all her scholars, my good lord.

Sim. Let me ask one thing. What do you think, sir, of
My daughter?

Per. As of a most virtuous princess.

Sim. And she is fair too, is she not?

Per. As a fair day in summer; wondrous fair.

No play, in fact, more openly discloses the hand of Shakspeare than *Pericles*, and fortunately his share in its composition appears to have been very considerable; he may be distinctly, though not fre-

Sim. My daughter, sir, thinks very well of you;
Ay, so well, that ~~peruse~~ peruse this writing, sir.

Per. What's here!
A letter, that she loves the knight of Tyre?
'Tis the king's subtilty, to have my life. (*Aside.*
O, seek not to intrap, my gracious lord,
A stranger and distressed gentleman,
That never aim'd so high, to love your daughter,
But bent all offices to honour her.

Sim. Thou hast bewitch'd my daughter, and thou art
A traitor.

Per. By the gods, I have not, sir.
Never did thought of mine levy offence;
Nor never did my actions yet commence
A deed might gain her love, or your displeasure.
My actions are as noble as my thoughts,
That never relish'd of a base descent.
I came unto your court, for honour's cause,
And not to be a rebel to her state;
And he that otherwise accounts of me,
This sword shall prove he's honour's enemy.

Sim. Now, by the gods, I do applaud his courage. (*Aside.*
Here comes my daughter, she can witness it.

Enter THAISA.

Yea, mistress, are you so peremptory? (*Addressing his daughter.*
Will you, not having my consent, bestow
Your love and your affections on a stranger?—
Hear, therefore, mistress; frame your will to mine,—
And you, sir, hear you.—Either be rul'd by me,
Or I will make you—man and wife.—
And for a further grief,—God give you joy!
What, are you both agreed?

Thais. Yes, if you love me, sir. (*Addressing Pericles.*

Per. Even as my life, my blood that fosters it. (*Exeunt.*

Thus contracted, the scene would no longer excite the "supreme contempt" which Mr. Steevens expresses for it, adding in reference to its original state, "such another gross, nonsensical dialogue, would be sought for in vain among the earliest and rudest efforts of the British theatre. It is impossible not to wish that the *Knights* had horse-whipped *Simonides*, and that *Pericles* had kicked him off the stage."

quently, traced, in the first and second acts ; after which, feeling the incompetency of his fellow-labourer, he seems to have assumed almost the entire management of the remainder, nearly the whole of the third, fourth, and fifth acts bearing indisputable testimony to the genius and execution of the great master.

The truth of these affirmations will be evident, if we give a slight attention to the sentiment and character which are developed in the scenes before us. It has been repeatedly declared, that *Pericles*, though teeming with incident, is devoid of character, an assertion which a little scrutiny is alone sufficient to refute.

Shakspeare has ever delighted in drawing the broad humour of inferior life, and in this, which we hold to be, the *first heir of his* *DRAMATIC invention*, no opportunity is lost for the introduction of such sketches ; accordingly, the first scene of the second act, and the third and sixth scenes of the fourth act, are occupied by delineations of this kind, coloured with the poet's usual strength and verisimilitude, and painting the shrewd but honest mirth of laborious fishermen, and the vicious *badinage* of the inhabitants of a brothel. Leaving these traits, however, which sufficiently speak for themselves, let us turn our view on the more serious persons of the drama.

Of the *minor* characters belonging to this groupe, none, except *Helicanus* and *Cerimon*, are, it must be confessed, worthy of consideration ; the former is respectable for his fidelity and integrity, though not individualised by any peculiar attribution, but in *Cerimon*, who exhibits the rare union of the nobleman and the physician, the most unwearied benevolence, the most active philanthropy, are depicted in glowing tints, and we have only to regret that he fills not a greater space in the business of the drama. He is introduced in the second scene of the third act, as having

“ Shaken off the golden slumber of repose,”

to assist, in a dreadfully inclement night, some shipwrecked mariners:

“ *Cer.* Get fire and meat for these poor men ;
It has been a turbulent and stormy night.

Serv. I have been in many ; but such a night as this,
Till now, I ne'er endur'd."

His prompt assistance on this occasion calls forth the eulogium of some gentlemen who had been roused from their slumbers by the violence of the tempest :

" Your honour has through Ephesus pour'd forth
Your charity, and hundreds call themselves
Your creatures, who by you have been restor'd :
And not your knowledge, personal pain, but even
Your purse, still open, hath built lord Cerimon
Such strong renown as time shall never —

They are here interrupted by two servants bringing in a chest which had been washed on shore, and which is found to contain the body of Thaisa, the wife of Pericles, on a survey of which, Cerimon pronounces, from the freshness of its appearance, that it had been too hastily committed to the sea, adding an observation which would form an excellent motto to an Essay on the means of restoring suspended animation :

" Death may usurp on nature many hours,
And yet the fire of life kindle again
The overpressed spirits."

The disinterested conduct and philosophic dignity of Cerimon cannot be placed in a more amiable and striking light, than in that which they receive from the following declaration, worthy of being inscribed in letters of gold in the library of every liberal cultivator of medical science :

" *Cerimon.* . . . I held it ever
Virtue and "knowledge" * were endowments greater
Than nobleness and riches : careless heirs
May the two latter darken and expend ;
But immortality attends the former,

* For the sake of perspicuity, I have substituted the word "knowledge," as synonymous with "cunning," the term in the original.

Making a man a god. 'Tis known, I ever
 Have studied physick, through which secret art,
 By turning o'er authorities, I have
 (Together with my practice) made familiar
 To me and to my aid, the blest infusions
 That dwell in vegetives, in metals, stones;
 And I can speak of the disturbances
 That nature works, and of her cures; which give me
 A more content in course of true delight
 Than to be thirsty after tottering honour,
 Or tie my treasure up in silken bags."

If we now contemplate the two chief personages of the play, *Pericles* and *Marina*; and if it can be proved that these occupy, as they should do, the fore ground of the picture, are well relieved, and characteristically sustained, nothing can be wanting, when combined with the other marks of authenticity collected by the commentators, to substantiate the genuine property of Shakspeare.

Buoyant with hope, ardent in enterprise, and animated by the keenest sensibility, *Pericles* is brought forward as a model of knight-hood. Chivalric in his habits, romantic in his conceptions, and elegant in his accomplishments, he is represented as the devoted servant of glory and of love. His failings, however, are not concealed; for the enthusiasm and susceptibility of his character lead him into many errors; he is alternately the sport of joy and grief, at one time glowing with rapture, at another plunged into utter despair. Not succeeding in his amatory overture at the court of Antiochus, and shocked at the criminality of that monarch and his daughter, he becomes a prey to the deepest despondency:—

"The sad companion, dull-eye'd melancholy,
 By me so us'd a guest is, not an hour,
 In the day's glorious walk, or peaceful night,
 The tomb where grief should sleep, can breed me quiet."*

Affliction, however, of a more unequivocal kind soon assails him; he is shipwrecked on the coast of Greece, and compelled to solicit

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. p. 181. Act i. sc. 2.

support from the benevolence of some poor fishermen. His address to these honest creatures is truly pathetic: —

“ *Per.* He asks of you, that never us’d to beg. —
What I have been, I have forgot to know;
But what I am, want teaches me to think on;
A man shrunk up with cold; my veins are chill,
And have no more of life, than may suffice
To give my tongue that heat, to ask your help.” *

From this state of dejection he is suddenly raised to the most sanguine pitch of hope, on perceiving the fishermen dragging in their net to shore a suit of rusty armour. Enveloped in this, he determines to appear at Pentapolis the neighbouring capital of Simonides, as a knight and gentleman; to purchase a steed with a jewel yet remaining on his arm, and to enter the lists of a tournament then in preparation, as a candidate for the hand of Thaisa, the daughter of the king. His exultation on the prospect, he thus expresses to his humble friends:

“ Now, by your furtherance, I am cloth’d in steel;
And, spite of all the rupture of the sea,
This jewel holds his bidding on my arm;
Unto thy value will I mount myself
Upon a courser, whose delightful steps
Shall make the gazer joy to see him tread.” †

The same rapid transition of the passions, and the same subjection to uncontrolled emotions mark his future course; the supposed deaths of his wife and daughter immerse him in the deepest abstraction and gloom; he is represented, in consequence of these events, as

“ A man, who for this three months hath not spoken
To any one, nor taken sustenance
But to prorogue his grief.” ‡

* Ibid. p. 213, 214. Act ii. sc. 1.

† Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xxi. p. 221. Act ii. sc. 1.

‡ Ibid. p. 353. Act v. sc. 1.

We are prepared therefore to expect, that the discovery of the existence of these dear relatives should have a proportionate effect on feelings thus constituted, so sensitive and so acute ; and, accordingly, the tide of rapture rolls in with overwhelming force. Nothing, indeed, can be more impressively conducted than the *recognition* of *Marina* ; it is Shakspeare, not in the infancy of his career, but approaching to the zenith of his glory. — Conviction on the part of Pericles is accompanied by a flood of tears ; why, says his daughter,

————— “ Why do you weep ? It may be

You think me an impostor. —

Per. O Helicanus, strike me, honour'd sir ;
Give me a gash, put me to present pain ;
Lest this great sea of joys rushing upon me,
O'erbear the shores of my mortality,
And drown me with their sweetness. O, come hither, —
Thou that was born at sea, buried at Tharsus,
And found at sea again ! — O Helicanus,
Down on thy knees, thank the holy gods.” *

Nature appeals here to the heart in a tone not to be misunderstood.

Ecstasy, however, cannot long be borne, the feeble powers of man soon sink beneath the violence of the emotion, and mark how Shakspeare closes the conflict :

“ *Per.* ————— “ I embrace you, sir.
Give me my robes ; I am wild in my beholding.
O heavens bless my girl ! But hark, what musick ? —
Tell Helicanus, my Marina, tell him

————— for yet he seems to doubt,
How sure you are my daughter. — But what musick ?

Her. My lord, I hear none.

Per. None ?

The musick of the spheres : list, my Marina. —

Most heavenly musick :

It nips me unto list'ning, and thick slumber

Hangs on mine eye-lids ; let me rest. (*He sleeps.*)” †

* Reed's Shakspeare, p. 371. Act v. sc. 1.

† Ibid. vol. xxi. p. 374. Act v. sc. 1.

It might be imagined that the above scene would almost necessarily preclude any chance of success in the immediately subsequent detail of the discovery of *Thaisa* ; but the poet has contrived, notwithstanding, to throw both novelty and interest into this the final dénouement of the play. Pericles, aided by the evidence of Cerimon, recognises his wife in the character of high Priestess of the Temple of Diana at Ephesus ; the acknowledgment is thus pathetically painted : —

“ *Per.* ——— No more, you gods ! your present kindness
Makes my past miseries sport : You shall do well,
That on the touching of her lips I may
Melt, and no more be seen. O come, be buried
A second time within these arms.

Marina. My heart
Leaps to be gone into my mother’s bosom. . . . (*Kneels to THAISA.*

Per. Look, who kneels here ! Flesh of thy flesh, *Thaisa* ;
Thy burden at the sea, and call’d *Marina*,
For she was yielded there.

Thaisa. Bless’d and mine own !” *

To the many amiable and interesting female characters with which the undisputed works of our poet abound, may be added the *Marina* of this drama, who, like *Miranda*, *Imogen*, and *Perdita*, pleases by the gentleness, and artless tenderness of her disposition ; though it must be allowed that *Marina* can only be considered as a *sketch* when compared with the more highly finished designs of our author’s maturer pencil ; it is a sketch, however, from the hand of a master, and cannot be mistaken.

Pericles commits his infant daughter, accompanied by her nurse *Lychorida*, to the protection of *Cleon* and *Dionyza* : —

“ *Per.* Good Madam, make me blessed in your care
In bringing up my child.

Dion. I have one myself,
Who shall not be more dear to my respect,
Than your’s, my lord.

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xxi. p. 384. Act v. sc. 3.

Per. Marina Madam, my thanks and prayers.

Cleon. We'll bring your grace even to the edge o'the shore ;
Then give you up to the mask'd Neptune, and
The gentlest winds of heaven.

Per. I will embrace
Your offer. Come, dear'st Madam. — O, no tears,
Lychorida, no tears :
Look to your little mistress, on whose grace
You may depend hereafter." *

The affectionate attachment of Marina to this friend of her infancy, and her deep-felt sorrow for her loss, advantageously open her character in the first scene of the fourth act, where she is introduced strewing the grave of Lychorida with flowers.

" *Enter MARINA, with a Basket of Flowers.*

Mar. No, no, I will rob Tellus of her weed,
To strew thy green with flowers: the yellows, blues,
The purple violets, and madrigolds,
Shall, as a chaplet, hang upon thy grave,
While summer days do last. Ah me! poor maid,
Born in a tempest, when my mother died,
This world to me is like a lasting storm,
Whirring me from my friends ; †

a passage, the leading idea of which, Shakspeare has transplanted with the same pleasing effect into his *Cymbeline*. ‡

Scarcely has Marina lamented the decease of her faithful attendant, when envy and malignity conspire against her life in the bosom of one who ought to have been her surest safeguard against misfortune. Dionyza, perceiving her own daughter eclipsed by the beauty and

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. pp. 284, 285. Act iii. sc. 4.

† Ibid. vol. xxi. pp. 297—299. Act iv. sc. 1.

‡ ——— " With fairest flowers,
While summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,
I'll sweeten thy sad grave. Thou shalt not lack
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose, nor
The azur'd hare-bell, like thy veins, no nor
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander
Out-sweeten'd not thy breath."

accomplishments of her ward, resolves upon her destruction, and bribes a wretch, named Leonine, to the commission of the deed. The dialogue which takes place on this occasion, between the ruffian and his intended victim, places the artless simplicity of the latter in a very pleasing point of view.

Leon. Come, say your prayers speedily.

Mar. What mean you?

Leon. If you require a little space for prayer,
I grant it: Pray; but be not tedious,
For the gods are quick of ear, and I am sworn
To do my work with haste.

Mar. Why, will you kill me?

Leon. To satisfy my lady.

Mar. Why would she have me killed?

Now, as I can remember,
I never did her hurt in all my life;
I never spake bad word, nor did ill turn
To any living creature: believe me,
I never kill'd a mouse, nor hurt a fly:
I trod upon a worm against my will,
But I wept for it. How have I offended,
Wherein my death might yield her profit, or
My life imply her danger?

Leon. My commission
Is not to reason of the deed, but do it.

Mar. You will not do't for all the world, I hope.
You are well favour'd, and your looks foreshow
You have a gentle heart. I saw you lately,
When you caught hurt in parting two that fought:
Good sooth, it show'd well in you; do so now:
Your lady seeks my life; come you between,
And save poor me, the weaker." *

Marina snatched from this villain by the sudden intervention of pirates, is sold by them to the keeper of a brothel at Mitylene, a situation which appears to her still more dreadful than that from which she has so narrowly escaped. She laments that Leonine had

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. p. 305. Act iv. sc. 1.

not executed his orders, or that the pirates had not thrown her over-board, and exclaims in language equally beautiful and appropriate,—

“ ————— O that the good gods
Would set me free from this unhallow'd place,
Though they did change me to the meanest bird
That flies i' the purer air.” *

Indebted to her talents and accomplishments, which she represents to her purchasers as more likely to be productive than the wages of prostitution, she is allowed to quit the brothel uninjured, but under a compact to devote the profits of her industry and skill to the support of her cruel oppressors.

The mild fortitude and resignation which she exhibits during this humiliating state of servitude, and the simple dignity which she displays in her person and manners, are forcibly delineated in the following observations of Pericles, who, roused from his torpor by her figure, voice, and features, and interested in her narrative, thus addresses her :—

“ Pr'ythee speak;
Falseness cannot come from thee, for thou look'st
Modest as justice, and thou seem'st a palace

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. p. 341. Act iv. sc. 6. — Much of the dialogue which passes among the worthless inhabitants of this bagnio, is seasoned with the strong and characteristic humour of Shakspeare. Boult, a servant of the place, being ordered to cry Marina through the market of Mitylene, describing her personal charms, is asked, on his return, how he found the inclination of the people, to which he replies,

“ 'Faith, they listened to me, as they would have hearkened to their father's testament. There was a Spaniard's mouth so watered, that he went to bed to her very description.

“ *Bawd.* We shall have him here to-morrow with his best ruff on.

“ *Boult.* To-night, to-night. But, mistress, do you know the French knight that cowers i' the hams?

“ *Bawd.* Who? Monsieur Veroles?

“ *Boult.* Ay; he offered to cut a caper at the proclamation; but he made a groan at it, and swore he would see her to-morrow.” Act iv. sc. 3.

“ If,” says Mr. Malone, alluding to the lines in Italics, “ there were no other proof of Shakspeare's hand in this piece, this admirable stroke of humour would furnish decisive evidence of it.”

For the crown'd truth to dwell in: — "yea" thou dost look
Like Patience, gazing on king's graves and smiling
Extremity out of act: " *

a picture which is rendered yet more touching by a subsequent trait;
for Lysimachus informs us

" ————— she would never tell
Her parentage; being demanded that,
She would sit still and weep." †

To this delightful sketch of female tenderness and subdued suffering, nearly all the interest of the last two acts is to be ascribed, and we feel, therefore, highly gratified that sorrows so unmerited, and so well borne, should, at length, terminate not only in repose, but in positive happiness. The poet, indeed, has allotted strict retributory justice to all his characters; the bad are severely punished, while in Pericles and his daughter, we behold

" Virtue preserv'd from fell destruction's blast,
Led on by heaven, and crown'd with joy at last." †

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. pp. 365, 366. Act v. sc. 1. The similar passage in Twelfth Night will occur to every one.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. p. 371. Act v. sc. 1.

‡ Ibid. p. 388.—Milton appears to have read Pericles with attention, and to have caught some of its phraseology, a circumstance strongly confirmatory of the genuineness of the play: thus Gower, in the opening lines, speaking of Antiochus, says, —

" This king unto him took a pheere,
Who died and left a female heir,
So buxom, blithe, and full of face,
As heaven had lent her all her grace;"

a passage which evidently hung on Milton's ear, when, in his L'Allegro, he is describing the uncertain origin of Euphrosyne: —

" Fill'd her with thee a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair."

Again, in the *first* edition of Lycidas, v. 157., a very significant epithet seems to have been copied from the same source: —

To whom, may it now be asked, if not to Shakspeare, can this play with any probability be given? Has not the above slight analysis of its two principal characters, with the quotations necessarily adduced, fully convinced us, that in style, sentiment, and imagery, and in the outline and conception of its chief female personage, the hand of our great master is undeniably displayed?

We presume, therefore, both the *external* and *internal evidence* for much the greater part of this play being the *composition of Shakspeare* may be pronounced complete and unanswerable; and it now only remains to enquire, if there be sufficient ground for considering *Pericles*, as we have ventured to do in this arrangement, as the *FIRST dramatic production* of our author's pen.

It is very extraordinary that the positive testimony of Dryden as to the *priority of Pericles*, especially if we weigh well the import of the context, should ever have admitted of a moment's doubt or controversy. Nothing can, we think, be more plainly declaratory than the lines in question, which shall be given at length: —

“ Where thou perhaps under the HUMMING tide :”

Milton.

“ The belching whale,
And HUMMING water must o'erwhelm thy corpse.”

Pericles.

It is remarkable, that when Milton, in his second edition, altered the word to *whelming*, he still clung to his former prototype.

The notice may appear whimsical or trifling, but I cannot help observing here, that a few lines of the initiatory address of Gower irresistibly remind me of some of the cadences of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*; for instance, this contemporary of Chaucer, alluding to the antiquity of his song, says, —

“ It hath been sung at festivals,
On ember-eves, and holy ales;
And lords and ladies of their lives,
Have read it for restoratives: —
If you, born in these latter times,
When wit's more ripe, accept my rhymes,
And that to hear an old man sing,
May to your wishes pleasure bring,
I life would wish, and that I might
Waste it for you, like taper-light.

" Your Ben and Fletcher in their *first young flight*,
 Did no *Volpone*, no *Arbaces* write:
 But hopp'd about, and short excursions made
 From bough to bough, as if they were afraid;
 And each were guilty of some *Slighted Maid*.
Shakspeare's own muse his Pericles FIRST bore;
 The *Prince of Tyre* was elder than *The Moor*:
 'Tis miracle to see a *first good play*;
 All hawthorns do not bloom on Christmas-day.
 A slender poet must have time to grow,
 And spread and burnish, as his brothers do:
 Who still looks lean, sure with some p— is curst,
 But no man can be Falstaff fat at *first*." *

This passage, if it mean any thing, must imply, not only from the bare assertion of one line, but from all the accessory matter, that *Pericles* was the *first young flight* of Shakspeare, that it was the *first offspring of his dramatic muse*, his *first play*. That this *was* the meaning of Dryden, and not merely that *Pericles* was produced before *Othello*, will be further evident from recollecting the occasion of the Prologue whence these lines are taken. It was written to introduce the *first play* of Dr. Charles D'Avenant, then only nineteen years of age, and the bard expressly calls it "*the blossom of his green years*," the "*rude essay of a youthful poet, who may grow up to write*," expressions which can assimilate it with *Pericles* only on the supposition that the latter was, like *Circe*, a *firstling* of dramatic genius.

That Dryden, who wrote this prologue in 1675, possessed, from his approximation to the age of Shakspeare, many advantages for ascertaining the truth, none will deny. When the former had attained the age of twenty, the latter had been dead but thirty-five years, and the subsequent connection of the modern bard with the stage, and his intimacy with Sir William D'Avenant, who had produced his first play in 1629, and had been well acquainted with Heminge and the surviving companions of Shakspeare, would furnish him with suffi-

* Prologue to the Tragedy of *Circe*, by Charles D'Avenant. 1675.

cient *data* for his assertion, independent of any reliance on the similar declarations of Shepherd and Tatham.

Taking the statement of Dryden, therefore, as a disclosure of the fact, it follows, of course, from what has been previously said on the epoch of Shakspeare's commencement as a dramatic writer, that *Pericles* must be referred to the autumn of the year 1590, an assignment which the consideration of a few particulars will tend to corroborate.

In the first place, it may be remarked, that the numerous *dumb shows* of this play, are of themselves a striking presumptive proof of its antiquity, indicating that Shakspeare, who subsequently laughed at these clumsy expedients, thought it necessary, at the opening of his career, to fall in with the fashion of the times, with a fashion which had reigned from the earliest establishment of our stage, which was still in vogue in 1590, but soon after this period became an object of ridicule, and began to decline.

Mr. Malone has remarked, that from the manner in which *Pericles* is mentioned in a metrical pamphlet, entitled *Pimlyco or Runne Redcap*, 1609, there is reason to conclude that it is coëval with the old play of *Jane Shore* *; and this latter being noticed by Beaumont and Fletcher in conjunction with *The Bold Beauchamps* †, a production which D'Avenant classes, in point of age, with *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus* ‡, pieces which appeared in or before 1590, he infers, per-

* " Amazde I stood to see a crowd
Of civil throats stretch'd out so lowd:
(As at a new play) all the roomes
Did swarm with gentiles mix'd with groomes;
So that I truly thought all these
Came to see *Shore* or *Pericles*."

† " I was ne'er at one of these before; but I should have seen *Jane Shore*, and my husband hath promised me any time this twelvemonth to carry me to *The Bold Beauchamps*."
—The Knight of the Burning Pestle.

‡ ————— " There is an old tradition,
That in the times of mighty *Tamburlaine*,
Of conjuring *Faustus*, and *The Beauchamps Bold*,
Your poets used to have the second day."

A Playhouse to be Let.

haps not injudiciously, that *Pericles* has a claim to similar antiquity, and should be ascribed to the year 1590. *

But a still stronger conclusion in favour of the date which, we think, should be assigned to *Pericles*, may be drawn from a suggestion of Mr. Steevens, which has not perhaps been sufficiently considered. This gentleman contends, that Shakspeare's Prince of Tyre was originally named *Pyroclès*, after the hero of Sidney's *Arcadia*, the character, as he justly observes, not bearing the smallest affinity to that of the Athenian statesman. "It is remarkable," says he, "that many of our ancient writers were ambitious to exhibit Sidney's worthies on the stage: and when his subordinate agents were advanced to such honour, how happened it that *Pyrocles*, their leader, should be overlooked? Musidorus (his companion), Argalus and Parthenia, Phalantus and Eudora, Andromana, &c. furnished titles for different tragedies; and perhaps *Pyrocles*, in the present instance, was defrauded of a like distinction. The names invented or employed by Sidney, had once such popularity, that they were sometimes borrowed by poets who did not profess to follow the direct current of his fables, or attend to the strict preservation of his characters. — I must add, that the *Appolyn* of the Story-book and Gower could have been rejected only to make room for a more favourite name; yet, however conciliating the name of *Pyrocles* might have been, that of *Pericles* could challenge no advantage with regard to general predilection. — All circumstances therefore considered, it is not improbable that our author designed his chief character to be called *Pyrocles*, not *Pericles*, however ignorance or accident might have shuffled the latter (a name of almost similar sound) into the place of the former."†

The probability of this happy conjecture will amount almost to certainty, if we diligently compare *Pericles* with the *Pyrocles* of the *Arcadia*; the same romantic, versatile, and sensitive disposition is

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 249.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. pp. 152, 153.

ascribed to both characters, and several of the incidents pertaining to the latter are found mingled with the adventures of the former personage, while, throughout the play, the obligations of its author to various other parts of the romance may be frequently and distinctly traced, not only in the assumption of an image or a sentiment, but in the adoption of the very words of his once popular predecessor, proving incontestably the poet's familiarity with and study of the *Arcadia* to have been very considerable. *

Now this work of Sidney, commenced in 1580, was corrected and published by his sister the Countess of Pembroke, in 1590, and the admiration which it immediately excited would naturally induce a young actor, then meditating his first essay in dramatic poetry, instantly to avail himself of its popularity, and, by appropriating the appellation of its principal hero, fix the attention of the public. That Shakspeare long preserved his attachment to the *Arcadia*, is evident from his *King Lear*, where the episode of Gloster and his sons is plainly copied from the first edition of this romance. †

The date assigned to *Pericles*, on this foundation, being admitted, it follows of course, that Shakspeare could not have had time to improve upon the sketch of a predecessor; and yet from the texture of some parts of the composition, we are compelled to infer, that in this first effort in dramatic poetry, he must have condescended to accept the assistance of a friend, whose inferiority to himself is distinctly visible through the greater part of the first two acts, a position the probability of which seems to have induced Mr. Steevens to yield his assent to Dryden's assertion. "In one light, indeed, I am ready," remarks this acute commentator, "to allow *Pericles* was our poet's first attempt. Before he was satisfied with his own strength, and

* Many instances of this kind have been pointed out by Mr. Steevens, in his notes on the play; namely, at pages 208. 213. 221. 227, 228. 258. 302.; and the list might be much enlarged by a careful collation of the two productions.

† Where the chapter is entitled "The pitifull state and story of the Paphlagonian unkinde king and his kinde sonne, first related by the sonne, then by the blind father."

trusted himself to the publick, he might have tried his hand with a *partner*, and entered the theatre in disguise. Before he ventured to face an audience on the stage, it was natural that he should peep at them through the curtain.”*

The objections which have been made to this *priority* of *Pericles* in point of time, may be reduced to three, of which the first is drawn from the non-enumeration of the play by Meres, when giving a list of our poet's dramas, in 1598.† But if it were the object of Shakspeare and his coadjutor to lie concealed from the public eye, of which there can be little doubt, since the former, as hath been remarked, having never owned his share in it, or supposing it to be forgotten, was afterwards willing to profit by the most valuable lines and ideas it contained‡, the omission of Meres is easily accounted for; yet granting that our author had been well known as the chief writer of *Pericles*, the validity of the objection is not thereby established, for we find in this catalogue neither the play of *King Henry the Sixth*, in any of its parts, nor the tragedy of *Hamlet*, pieces undoubtedly written and performed before the year 1598.

A second objection is founded on the title-page of the first edition of *Pericles*, published in 1609, where this drama is termed “the *late* and much admired play.”§ It is obvious that from a word so indefinite in its signification as *late*, whether taken adverbially or adjectively, nothing decisive can result. To a play written eighteen years before, the lexicographic definitions of the term in question, namely, *in times past, not long ago, not far from the present*, may, without doubt, justly apply; but we must also add, that it is uncertain whether the word is meant to refer to the period of the composition of the play, or to the date of its last representation; *lately performed* being most probably the sense in which the editor intended to be understood.

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. p. 400.

† Vide Censura Literaria, vol. ix. p. 46.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. p. 407. note.

§ Ibid. p. 391. note.

Lastly, Mr. Douce is of opinion that three of the devices of the knights in act the second, scene the second, of *Pericles*, are copied from a translation of the *Heroicall Devises of Paradin and Symeon*, printed in 1591, which, if correct, would necessarily bring forward the date of the play either to this or the subsequent year; but from this difficulty we are relieved even by Mr. Douce himself, who owns that two out of the three are to be found in *Whitney's Emblems*, published in 1586, a confession which leads us to infer that the third may have an equally early origin. *

From the extensive survey which has now been taken of the merits and supposed era of this early drama, the reader, it is probable, will gather sufficient *data* for concluding that by far *the greater part of it issued from the pen of Shakspeare*, that it was *his first dramatic production*, that it appeared towards the close of the year 1590, and that it deserves to be removed from the Appendix to the editions of Shakspeare, where it has hitherto appeared, and incorporated in the body of his works.

2. COMEDY OF ERRORS, 1591. That this play should be ascribed to the year 1591, and not to 1593, or 1596, has, we think, been fully established by Mr. Chalmers †, to whom, therefore, the reader is referred, with this additional observation, that, from an account published in the *British Bibliographer*, of an interlude, named *Jacke Jugeler*, which was entered in the Stationers' books in 1562-3, it appears that the *Menæchmi* of Plautus, on which this comedy is founded, "was, in part at least, known at a very early period upon the English stage ‡," a further proof that versions or imitations of it had been in existence long prior to Warner's translation in 1595.

As the *Comedy of Errors* is one of the few plays of Shakspeare mentioned by *Meres* in 1598, and as we shall have occasion to refer more than once to the catalogue of this critic, it will be necessary, before we proceed farther in our arrangement, to give a transcript of

* Vide Douce's *Illustrations of Shakspeare*, vol. ii. pp. 127, 128.

† Supplemental Apology, pp. 274. et seq.

‡ Vol. i. pp. 398—400.

this short but interesting article. It is taken from his "Palladis Tamia. Wit's Treasury. Being the second part of Wit's Common Wealth," 1598, and from that part of it entitled "A comparative discourse of our English Poets, with the Greeke, Latine, and Italian Poets."

"As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latines, so Shakspeare, among y^e English, is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for comedy, witness his Gëtlemē of Verona, his Errors, his Love Labor's Lost, his Love Labour's Wonne, his Midsummer's-Night Dreame, and his Merchant of Venice: for tragedy, his Richard the 2. Richard the 3. Henry the 4. King John, Titus Andronicus, and his Romeo and Juliet." *

Some of the commentators, and more particularly Ritson and Steevens, have positively pronounced this play to have been originally the composition of a writer anterior to Shakspeare, and that it merely received some embellishments from our poet's pen: "On a careful revision of the foregoing scenes," says the latter gentleman, "I do not hesitate to pronounce them the composition of two very unequal writers. Shakspeare had undoubtedly a share in them; but that the entire play was no work of his, is an opinion which (as Benedick says) 'fire cannot melt out of me; I will die in it at the stake.' Thus, as we are informed by Aulus Gellius, lib. iii. cap. 3. some plays were absolutely ascribed to Plautus which in truth had only been (*retractatæ et expolitæ*) retouched and polished by him." †

We have frequently occasion to admire the wit, the classical elegance, and the ingenuity of Mr. Steevens, but we have often also to regret the force of his prejudices, and the unqualified dogmatism of his critical opinions. That the business of the *Comedy of Errors* is better calculated for farce than for legitimate comedy, cannot be

* For this paragraph, the reader is referred to p. 282. of the original edition, or to p. 46. of the ninth volume of the *Censura Literaria*.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xx. p. 461. note.

denied; and it must also be confessed that the doggrel verses attributed to the two Dromios, contribute little to the humour or value of the piece; but let us, at the same time, recollect, that the admission of the latter was in conformity to the custom of the age in which this play was produced*, and that the former, though perplexed and somewhat improbable†, possesses no small share of entertainment.

This drama of Shakspeare is, in fact, much more varied, rich, and interesting in its incidents, than the *Menæchmi* of Plautus; and while in rigid adherence to the unities of action, time, and place, our poet rivals the Roman play, he has contrived to insinuate the necessary previous information for the spectator, in a manner infinitely more pleasing and artful than that adopted by the Latin bard, for whilst Plautus has chosen to convey it through the medium of a prologue, Shakspeare has rendered it at once natural and pathetic, by placing it in the mouth of Ægeon, the father of the twin brothers.

In a play of which the plot is so intricate, occupied in a great measure by mere personal mistakes, and their whimsical results, no elaborate developement of character can be expected; yet is the portrait of Ægeon touched with a discriminative hand, and the pressure of age and misfortune is so painted, as to throw a solemn, dignified, and impressive tone of colouring over this part of the fable, contrasting well with the lighter scenes which immediately follow, a mode of relief which is again resorted to at the close of the drama, where the re-union of Ægeon and Æmilia, and the recognition of their children, produce an interest in the denouement, of a nature more affecting than the tone of the preceding scenes had taught us to expect.

As to the comic action which constitutes the chief bulk of this piece, if it be true that to excite laughter, awaken attention, and fix

* For specimens of the doggrel verse which preceded and accompanied the era of the Comedy of Errors, see Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xx. pp. 462, 463.

† The addition of the twin servants to their twin masters, doubles the improbability, while it adds to the fund of entertainment.

curiosity, be essential to its dramatic excellence, the *Comedy of Errors* cannot be pronounced an unsuccessful effort; both reader and spectator are hurried on to the close, through a series of thick-coming incidents, and under the pleasurable influence of novelty, expectation, and surprise; and the dialogue, so far from betraying the inequalities complained of by Ritson and Steevens, is uniformly vivacious, pointed, and even effervescing. Shakspeare is visible, in fact, throughout the entire play, as well in the broad exuberance of its mirth, as in the cast of its more chastised parts, a combination of which may be found in the punishment and character of Pinch the pedagogue and conjurer, who is sketched in the strongest and most marked style of our author.

If we consider, therefore, the construction of the fable, the narrowness of its basis, and that its powers of entertainment are almost exclusively confined to a continued deception of the external senses, we must confess that Shakspeare has not only improved on the Plautian model, but, making allowance for a somewhat too coarse vein of humour, has given to his production all the interest and variety that the nature and the limits of his subject would permit.

3. LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST: 1591. In the first edition of Mr. Malone's Chronological Essay on Shakspeare's Plays, which was published in January, 1778, the year 1591 is the date assigned to this drama, an epoch, which, in the re-impression of 1793, was changed in the catalogue for the subsequent era of 1594, though the reasons given for this alteration appeared so inconclusive to the chronologist himself, that he ventures in the text merely to say,—"I think it probable, that our author's first draft of this play was written in or before 1594*," a mode of expression which leaves as much authority to the former as the latter date. In short, the only motive brought forward for the present locality of this piece in Mr. Malone's list, where it appears posterior to *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, the

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 262.

Comedy of Errors, and *The Taming of the Shrew*, is, that there is more attempt at delineation of character in it than in either the first or second of the plays just mentioned*, a reason which loses all its weight the moment we seriously contrast this comedy with its supposed predecessors, for who would then think of assigning to the very slight sketches of Biron and Katharine, any mark of improvement, either in poetic or dramatic strength, over the imaginative powers of the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, or the strong, broad, and often characteristic outlines of *The Taming of the Shrew*!

The construction, indeed, of the whole play, the variety of its versification, the abundancy of its rhymes, and the length and frequency of its doggrel lines, very clearly prove this comedy to be one of our author's very earliest compositions; indications which *originally* disposed Mr. Malone to give it to the year which we have adopted, and which induced Mr. Chalmers to assign it to 1592, though why he prefers this year to the preceding does not appear.

Of *Love's Labour's Lost*, as it was performed in the year 1591, we possess no exact transcript; for, in the oldest edition which has hitherto been found of this play, namely that of 1598, it is said in the title-page to be *newly corrected and augmented*, with the further information, that it had been *presented before Her Highness the last Christmas*; facts which show, that we are in possession not of the first draft or edition of this comedy, but only of that copy which represents it as it was *revived and improved* for the entertainment of the Queen, in 1597.

The *original sketch*, whether printed or merely performed, we conceive to have been one of the pieces alluded to by Greene, in 1592, when he accuses Shakspeare of being *an absolute Johannes fac-totum* of the stage, *primarily and principally* from the mode of its execution, which, as we have already observed, betrays the earliness of its source in the strongest manner; *secondarily*, that, like *Pericles*, it occasionally copies the language of the *Arcadia*, then with all the attractive

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 264.

novelty of its reputation in full bloom *, and *thirdly*, that in the fifth act, various allusions to the Muscovites or Russians, seem evidently to point to a period when Russia and its inhabitants attracted the public consideration, a period which we find, from Hackluyt †, to have occupied the years 1590 and 1591, when, as Warburton and Chalmers have observed, the arrangement of Russian commerce engaged very particularly the attention, and formed the conversation, of the court, the city, and the country. ‡

It may be also remarked, that while no play among our author's works exhibits more decisive marks of juvenility than *Love's Labour's Lost*, none, at the same time, is more strongly imbued with the peculiar cast of his youthful genius; for in style and manner, it bears a closer resemblance to the *Venus and Adonis*, the *Rape of Lucrece*, and the *earlier Sonnets*, than any other of his genuine dramas. It presents us, in short, with a continued contest of wit and repartee, the persons represented, whether high or low, vying with each other, throughout the piece, in the production of the greatest number of jokes, sallies, and verbal equivoques. The profusion with which these are every-where scattered, has, unfortunately, had the effect of throwing an air of uniformity over all the characters, who seem solely intent on keeping up the ball of raillery; yet is *Biron* now and then discriminated by a few strong touches, and *Holofernes* is probably the portrait of an individual, some of his quotations having justly induced the commentators to infer, that *Florio*, the author of *First and Second Fruits*, dialogues in Italian and English, and of a *Dictionary*, entitled *A World of Words*, was the object of the poet's satire.

If in dramatic strength of painting this comedy be deficient, and it appears to us, in this quality, inferior to *Pericles*, we must, independent of the vivacity of its dialogue already noticed, acknowledge,

* Vide Chalmers's Supplemental Apology, pp. 281, 282.; and Douce's Illustrations, vol. i. p. 238.

† Vol. i. p. 498-9, edit. 1598.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 151. note; and Chalmers's Supplemental Apology, p. 283.

that it displays several poetical gems, that it contains many just moral apophthegms, and that it affords, even in the closet, no small fund of amusement; and here it is worthy of being remarked, and may, indeed, without prejudice or prepossession, be asserted, that, even to the earliest and most unfinished dramas of our poet, a peculiar interest is felt to be attached, not arising from the fascination of a name, but from an intrinsic and almost inexplicable power of pleasing, which we in vain look for in the juvenile plays of other bards, and which serves, perhaps better than any other criterion, to ascertain the genuine property of Shakspeare; it is, in fact, a touchstone, which, when applied to *Titus Andronicus*, and what has been termed the *First Part* of Henry the Sixth, must, if every other evidence were wanting, flash conviction on our senses.

4. KING HENRY THE SIXTH: PART THE FIRST: 1592;

5. KING HENRY THE SIXTH: PART THE SECOND: 1592:

It will be immediately perceived that this arrangement is intended to exclude what has very improperly, in modern times, been ascribed to Shakspeare as the *First Part* of his King Henry the Sixth. The spuriousness of this part, indeed, has been so satisfactorily proved by Mr. Malone, that no doubt can be supposed any longer to rest on the subject; and, if any lingered, it would be still further shaken by what has since transpired; for, from the discovery of Mr. Henslowe's Accounts, at Dulwich College, it appears that this play was never entitled, as Mr. Malone had conjectured, to its present appellation, but was simply styled as it is here entered, *Henry the Sixth*, and had no connection with the subsequent plays of Peele and Marlowe on the same reign. The entry is dated the 3d of March, 1591, and the play being the property of Lord Strange's company, and performed at the Rose theatre, with neither of which Shakspeare had, at any time, the smallest connection, render the external testimony still more confirmatory of Mr. Malone's position, as to the antiquity, priority, and insulated origin of this drama.* The internal evidence,

* Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 355. note.

however, is quite sufficient for the purpose ; for the hand of Shakspeare is nowhere visible throughout the entire of this “ Drum-and-trumpet-Thing,” as Mr. Morgan has justly termed it.* Yet that our author, subsequent to his re-modelling *The first Part of the Contention*, and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of Yorke*, might alter the arrangement, or slightly correct the diction of this play, is very possible,—an interference, however trivial, which probably induced the editors of the first folio, from the period in which this design was executed, to register it with Shakspeare’s undisputed plays, under the improper title of *The Third Part of King Henry the Sixth*. †

As this drama therefore, which we hold to contain not ten lines of Shakspeare’s composition, was, when originally produced, called *The Play of Henry the VI.*, and in 1623, registered *The Third Part of King Henry the VI.* ; though, in the folio published during the same year, it was then for the *first* time named the *first* part, would it not be allowable to infer, that the two plays which our poet built on the foundations of Marlowe, or perhaps Marlowe, Peele, and Greene, though not printed before they appeared in the folio, were yet termed, not as they are designated in the modern editions, the *second* and *third* parts, but as we have here called them, the *first* and *second* parts? Such, in fact, appears to have been the case ; for, since the publication of Mr. Malone’s Essay, an entry on the Stationers’ Registers has been discovered ‡, made by Tho. Pavier, and dated

* An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff. 8vo. 1777, p. 49.

† Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 241.—It is conjectured by Mr. Malone, that Shakspeare, for the advantage of his own theatre, having written a few lines in *The First Part of King Henry VI.*, after his own *Second* and *Third Part* had been played, the editors of the first Folio conceived this a sufficient warrant for attributing it, along with the others, to him, in the general collection of his works. Vol. xiv. p. 259. His prior supposition, however, “ that they gave it a place as a necessary introduction to the two other parts,” especially if we consider the great popularity which it had enjoyed, and the general ignorance of the audience in historical lore, will sufficiently account, in those lax times of literary appropriation, for its insertion and attribution.

‡ The discovery was made by Mr. Chalmers, vide Supplemental Apology, p. 292.

April, 19th, 1602, of "The 1st and 2d pts of Henry VI. ij. books *;" which entry, whether it be supposed to apply to the original *Contention* and *True Tragedy*, or to an intended edition of the same plays as altered by Shakspeare, clearly proves, that this designation of *first* and *second* was here given either to the primary or secondary set of these two plays, and, if applied to one set, would necessarily be applicable to, and used in speaking of, the other.

These two plays then, founded on *The First Part of the Contention of the Two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster*, and on the *Second*, or *The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke*, written by Marlowe and his friends about the year 1590 †, we conceive to have been brought forward by Shakspeare with great and numerous improvements, in 1592.

The vacillation of the commentators in determining the era of our author's two parts of *Henry the Sixth*, has been very extraordinary. The year 1592 was fixed upon in 1778; this, in 1793, was changed to 1593, or 1594; and in 1803, to 1591; while Mr. Chalmers, in 1799, had adopted the date of 1595!

That these plays had received their new dress from the hand of Shakspeare, previous to September, 1592, is, we think, irreversibly established by Greene's parody, in his *Groatsworth of Wit*, on a line in the second of these productions, an allusion which, with the context, can neither be set aside nor misapplied: that they were thus re-modelled in 1592, rather than in 1591, will appear highly probable, when we reflect that, in the passage where this parody is found, Shakspeare is termed, in reference to the stage, *an absolute Johannes factotum*, an epithet which, as we have before remarked,

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 126.

† Mr. Malone, in his "Dissertation on King Henry VI." was of opinion, that the *First Part* of the *Contention*, &c. came from the pen of Robert Greene; (vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xiv. p. 257.) but in his "Chronological Order," he inclines to the supposition of Marlowe being the author of both Parts; (vol. ii. p. 246.) It is more probable, I think, from the language of the *Groatsworth of Wit*, that Marlowe, Greene, and Peele, were jointly concerned in their composition.

implies that our poet had written and altered several pieces before that period, and had the two parts of *Henry the Sixth* been early in the series, that is, immediately subsequent to *Pericles*, the indignation of Greene, no doubt, had been sooner expressed; for we find him writing with great warmth, under a sense of recent injury, and under the pressure of mortal disease; "albeit weakness," says he, "will scarce suffer me to write;" a time which certainly would not have been chosen for the annunciation of his anger, had the supposed offence been given, and it must have been known as soon as committed, a year or two before. We feel confident, therefore, from this chain of argument, that the *two parts* of *Henry the Sixth* included in our catalogue, were not brought on the stage before 1592, and then only just in time to enable poor Greene to express his sentiments ere he left this sublunary scene.

The plan which Mr. Malone has adopted in printing these plays, that of distinguishing the amended and absolutely new passages from the original and comparatively meagre text of Marlowe and his coadjutors, seems to have been caught from a hint dropped by Mr. Maurice Morgan, who, speaking of these *two parts* of Henry VI., observes, that "they have certainly received what may be called a *thorough repair*.—I should conceive, it would not be very difficult to feel one's way through these plays, and distinguish every where the metal from the clay."*

It will not be denied that the task thus suggested, has been carried into execution with much skill and discrimination, and furnishes a curious proof of the plastic genius and extraordinary powers of adaptation with which our poet was gifted in the very dawn of his career. Compared with the pieces which he had hitherto produced, a style of far greater dignity, severity, and tragic modulation, was to be formed, and accordingly those portions of these plays which emanated solely or in a high degree from the mind of Shakspeare,

* Essay on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff, p. 49. note.

will be found in many instances even not inferior to the best parts of his latest and most finished works, while, at the same time, they harmonise sufficiently with the general tone of his predecessors, to preclude any flagrant breach of unity and consistency in the character of the diction and versification, though, to a practised critic, the superiority of our author, both in the fluency of his metre, and the beauty and facility of his expression, may be readily discerned.

Contrary to the common opinion, a strong and correct delineation of character appears to us the most striking feature in the two parts of this historical drama. That sainted, but powerless phantom, Henry of Lancaster, interests our feelings, notwithstanding the imbecillities of his public conduct, by the pious endurance of his sufferings, and the philosophic pathos of his sentiments. How much his patient sorrow and plaintive morality, depicted as they are amid the desolations of warfare, arrest and fascinate our attention by the power of contrast, perhaps no apathy can refuse to acknowledge. Mournfully sweet, indeed, are the strains which flow from this unhappy monarch, when, for an instant retired from the horrors of the Field of Towton, he pours forth the anguish of his soul, and closes his reflections with a picture of rural repose, glowing with such a mellow and lovely light amid the shades of regal misery which surround it, as to awaken sensations that steal through the bosom with a holy and delicious warmth.

Between this character, and that of Richard of Gloucester in the same play, what a strength of contrast ! so decided is the opposition, indeed, that not a shadow, not an atom of assimilation exists. The ferocious wickedness of this hypocritical and sarcastic villain is as vividly and distinctly drawn in the *Second* or *Last Part of Henry the Sixth* as in the tragedy of *Richard the Third*, the soliloquies in Acts the third and fifth as clearly developing the structure of his mind as any scene of the play distinguished by his regal title.

Nor do the other leading personages of these dramas exhibit less striking touches of the strong characterisation peculiar to our poet. The portraits of King Edward, and Queen Margaret, of the Dukes

of York and Warwick, of Humphrey of Gloster and Cardinal Beaufort, are alike faithful to history and to nature, while the death of the ambitious prelate is unparalleled for its awful sublimity, its terrific delineation of a tortured conscience; a scene, of which the impressions are so overpowering, that, to adopt the language of Dr. Johnson, "the superficial reader cannot miss them, the profound can image nothing beyond them."*

As these two parts, therefore, whether we consider the original text, or the numerous alterations and additions of Shakspeare, hold a rank greatly superior to the elder play of

" Henry the sixth in swaddling bands crown'd king,"

a production which, at the same time, offers no trace of any finishing strokes from the master-bard, it would be but doing justice to the original design of Shakspeare to insert for the future in his works only the two pieces which he remodelled, designating them as they are found in this arrangement, and which seems, indeed, merely a restoration of their first titles. This may the more readily be done, as there appears no necessary connection between the elder drama, and those of Shakspeare on the same reign; whereas between the two plays of our author, and between them and his *Richard the Third*, not only an intimate union, but a regular series of unbroken action subsists.

If, however, it should be thought convenient to have the old play of *Henry the Sixth* within the reach of reference, let it be placed in an Appendix to the poet's works, dislodging for that purpose the disgusting Tragedy of *Titus Andronicus*, which has hitherto, to the disgrace of our national literature, and of our noblest writer, accompanied every edition aspiring to be complete, from the folio of 1623 to the re-impression of 1813!

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xiii. p. 307. note.

✓ 5. A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM: 1593. In endeavouring to ascertain the order in which Shakspeare's plays were written, it would seem a duty, on the part of the chronologist, where no passage positively indicates the contrary, not to attribute to the poet the composition of several pieces during the course of the same year; for, admitting the fertility of our author to have been, what it unquestionably was, very great, still, without some certain date annihilating all room for conjecture, it would be a gross violation of probability to ascribe even to him the production of *four* or even *three* of his capital productions, and such productions too, in the space of but twelve months. This, however, has been done, in their respective arrangements, twice by Mr. Malone, and six times by Mr. Chalmers, the latter gentleman having allotted to our dramatist not less than seventeen plays in the course of only five years! Surely such an attribution is, of itself, sufficient to stagger the most willing credulity, particularly when we find that, during the course of this period, occupying the years 1595, 1596, 1597, 1598, and 1599, four such plays as the following are appropriated to one year, that of 1597,—*Henry IV. the Second Part, Henry V., The Merchant of Venice, and Hamlet*. Now as these pieces, so far from resembling the light and rapid sketches of Lopez de la Vega or of Heywood, are among the most elaborate of our author's productions, and as no data with any pretensions to certainty can be adduced for the assignment in question, we must be allowed, notwithstanding the ingenuity and indefatigable research of Mr. Chalmers, to doubt the propriety of his chronological system. *

Acting, therefore, on this idea, that where no *decisive* evidence to the contrary is apparent, not more than two plays should be

* See his Table, in Supplemental Apology, pp. 466, 467, where he tells us that in making it, he has been governed "rather by the influence of moral certainty, than directed by any supposed necessity of fixing some of the dramas to each year;" but where is the evidence that shall reconcile us to the necessity of passing over the years 1610, 1611, and 1612, without the production of a single play, and then ascribing to the year 1613, three such compositions, as *The Tempest, The Twelfth-Night, and Henry VIII.*?

assigned to our bard in the compass of one year, and being firmly persuaded, from the argument which has been brought forward, that the *two parts* of *Henry the Sixth* were the product of the year 1592, while, at the same time, we agree with the majority of the commentators in considering the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* as an early composition, it has been thought most consonant to probability to give to the latter, in lieu of the epoch of 1592, or 1595, or 1598, its present intermediate station; and this has been done, even though the plays on *Henry the Sixth*, being built on the basis of other writers, cannot be supposed to have occupied so much of the poet's time as more original efforts.

The *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, then, is the first play which exhibits the imagination of Shakspeare in all its fervid and creative power; for though, as mentioned in Meres's catalogue, as having numerous scenes of continued rhyme, as being barren in fable, and defective in strength of character, it may be pronounced the offspring of youth and inexperience, it will ever in point of fancy be considered as equal to any subsequent drama of the poet.

There is, however, a light in which the best plays of Shakspeare should be viewed, which will, in fact, convert the supposed defects of this exquisite sally of sportive invention into positive excellence. A *unity of feeling* most remarkably pervades and regulates their entire structure, and the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, a title in itself declaratory of the poet's object and aim, partakes of this bond, or principle of coalescence, in a very peculiar degree. It is, indeed, a fabric of the most buoyant and ærial texture, floating as it were between earth and heaven, and tinted with all the magic colouring of the rainbow,

“ The earth hath bubbles as the water has,
And this is of them.”

In a piece thus constituted, where the imagery of the most wild and fantastic dream is actually embodied before our eyes, where the principal agency is carried on by beings lighter than the gossamer, and smaller than the cowslip's bell, whose elements are the moon-

beams and the odoriferous atmosphere of flowers, and whose sport it is

“ To dance in ringlets to the whistling wind,”

it was necessary, in order to give a filmy and consistent legerity to every part of the play, that the human agents should partake of the same evanescent and visionary character; accordingly both the higher and lower personages of this drama are the subjects of illusion and enchantment, and love and amusement their sole occupation; the transient perplexities of thwarted passion, and the grotesque adventures of humorous folly, touched as they are with the tenderest or most frolic pencil, blending admirably with the wild, sportive, and romantic tone of the scenes where

“ Trip the light fairies and the dapper elves,”

and forming together a whole so variously yet so happily interwoven, so racy and effervescent in its composition, of such exquisite levity and transparency, and glowing with such luxurious and phosphorescent splendour, as to be perfectly without a rival in dramatic literature.

Nor is this piece, though, from the nature of its fable, unproductive of any *strong* character, without many pleasing discriminations of passion and feeling. Mr. Malone asks if “ a single passion be agitated by the faint and childish solitudes of Hermia and Demetrius, of Helena and Lysander, those shadows of each other?”* Now, whatever may be thought of Demetrius and Lysander, the characters of Hermia and Helena are beautifully drawn, and finely contrasted, and in much of the dialogue which occurs between them, the chords both of love and pity are touched with the poet’s wonted skill. In their interview in the wood, the contrariety of their dispositions is completely developed; Hermia is represented as

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 251.

————— “keen and shrewd :
 ——— a vixen, when she went to school,
 And, though but little, fierce,”

and in her difference with her friend, threatens to scratch her eyes out with her nails, while Helena, meek, humble, and retired, sues for protection, and endeavours in the most gentle manner to deprecate her wrath :

“ I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
 Let her not hurt me : I was never curst ;
 I have no gift at all in shrewishness ;
 I am a right maid for my cowardice ;
 Let her not strike me : —
 Good H ermia, do not be so bitter with me.
 I evermore did love you, Hermia,
 Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong’d you ; —
 And now, so you will let me quiet go,
 To Athens will I bear my folly back,
 And follow you no further : Let me go :
 You see how simple and how fond I am.”

And in an earlier part of this scene, where Helena first suspects that her friend had conspired with Demetrius and Lysander to mock and deride her, nothing can more exquisitely paint her affectionate temper, and the heartfelt pangs of severing friendship, than the following lines, most touching in their appeal, an echo from the very bosom of nature itself : —

“ Injurious Hermia ! most ungrateful maid ! —
 Is all the counsel that we two have shar’d,
 The sister’s vows, the hours that we have spent,
 When we have chid the hasty-footed time
 For parting us, — O, and is all forgot ?
 All school-day’s friendship, childhood innocence ?
 We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
 Have with our needles created both one flower,
 Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
 Both warbling of one song, both in one key ;
 As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
 Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
 Like to a double cherry, seeming parted ;

But yet a union in partition,
 Two lovely berries moulded on one stem :
 So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart ; —
 And will you rent our ancient love asunder,
 To join with men in scorning your poor friend ?
 It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly :
 Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it ;
 Though I alone do feel the injury."

Of the *Fairy Mythology* which constitutes the principal and most efficient part of this beautiful drama, it is the more necessary that we should take particular notice, as it forms not only a chief feature of the superstitions of the age, but was, in fact, re-modelled and improved by the genius of our poet.

The utmost confusion has in general overshadowed this subject, from mixing the *Oriental* with the *Gothic* system of fabling, the voluptuous or monstrous Fairies of eastern and southern romance, with those of the popular superstition of the north of Europe ; two races in all their features remarkably distinct, and productive of two very opposite styles both of imagery and literature.

The poets and romance writers of Spain, Italy, and France, have evidently derived the imaginary beings whom they term *Fairies*, whether of the benignant or malignant species, from the mythology of Persia and Arabia. The channel for this stream of fiction was long open through the medium of the crusades, and the dominion of the Moors of Spain, more especially when the language of these invaders became, during the middle ages, the vehicle of science and general information. Hence we find the strongest affinity between the *Peri* and *Dives* of the Persians, and the two orders of the *Genii* of the Arabians, and the *Fairies* and *Demons* of the south of Europe.

The *Peri*, or as the word would be pronounced in Arabic, the *Fairi*, of the Persians, are represented as females of the most exquisite beauty, uniformly kind and benevolent in their disposition, of the human form and size, and, though not limited to our transient existence, subject to death. They are supposed to inhabit a region of their own, to play in the plighted clouds, to luxuriate in the hues

of the rainbow, and to live upon the exhalations of the jessamine and the rose. *

Contrasted with these lovely essences, the *Dives* are described as males of the most hideous aspect and ferocious temper; in their stature, monstrous, deformed, and abominable; in their habits, wicked, cruel, and unrelenting.

Very similar in their attributes, but with less beauty and brilliancy in the delineation of the amiable species, were the *good* and *bad Genii* of the Arabians; and, as in Persia, a *Genistan*, or Fairy-land, was allotted to the benignant class.

From these sources, then, is to be deduced that tone of fiction which pervades the romantic and poetical literature of the warmer European climates, especially in all that relates to the fair and beautiful of Oriental conception. In the *Fairies* of BOIARDO and ARIOSTO, in the metrical and prose romances of France and Spain, and in the *Lays* of MARIE; in their *Fata Morgana*, *Urgande*, and *Mourgue La Faye*, and in the *superhuman misioesses* of *Sir Launfale* and *Sir Gruelan*, we readily discern their Persian prototype, the *Peri*, *Mergian Banou*. †

And to this cast of fiction, derived through the medium of the Italians, was *Spenser* indebted for the form and colouring which he has appropriated to his *Fairies*; beings, however, still more aloof from the Gothic popular elves than even the supernatural agents of the bards of Italy, as connecting with their orientalism, a continued allegorical, and, consequently, a totally abstract character.

For the origin, therefore, or *prima stamina* of the *Fairies* of *Shakespeare*, and of *British popular tradition*, we must turn to a very different quarter, even so far northward as to *Scandinavia*, the land of our Gothic progenitors. The establishment of the two kingdoms

* Vide Ouseley's *Persian Miscellanies*.

† The *Lays* of *Lanval* and *Gruelan* have been translated by Way in his *Fabliaux*, vol. i. p. 157. 177.; a description also of *Mourgue La Faye* may be found in the preceding tale, called *The Vale of False Lovers*, taken from the prose romance of *Lancelot du Lac*, 3 vols. folio. bl. l. Paris. 1520.

of the Ostrogoths and Wisigoths, on the shores of the Euxine Sea, by colonies from the Scandick peninsula, took place at a very early period, and the consequence of these settlements was the speedy invasion and conquest of the southern provinces of the Roman empire; for Denmark and Germany having submitted to the arms of the Goths, these restless warriors seized upon Spain in 409, entered Italy and captured Rome in 410, invaded France in 412, and commenced their conquest of England in 447. Upon all these countries, but most permanently upon England, did they impose their language, and a large portion of their superstitions. Such were their influence and success, indeed, in this island, that they not only compelled us to embrace their religious rites, but totally superseded our former manners and customs, and planted for ever in our mouths a diction radically distinct from that to which we had been accustomed, a diction which includes to this day a vocabulary of terms relative to our poetical and superstitious creeds which is alike common to both nations. *

Long, therefore, ere the Arabians began to disseminate their literature from the walls of Cordova, were the Goths in full possession not only of the Spanish peninsula, where their empire attained its height in the year 500, but of the greater part of this island. The Moors, it is well known, did not enter Spain until 712, consequently the Scandinavian emigrants had the opportunity of three centuries in that fine country, for the gradual propagation of their poetical credulity. Long, also, before the Crusades, the second supposed source of oriental superstition, could produce their imagined effect, are we able to trace the Fairy Mythology of the Goths in all its essential features. The first Crusade, under Godfrey, terminated in the capture of Jerusalem in July 1099, and the speediest return of any of its adventurers may be ascribed to the year 1100; but so early as 863 do we find the belief of the Fairies established in Norway, and

* Thus the Gothic terms *Fegur*, *Alfur*, *Uitruur*, *Dwergur*, *Meyar*, *Pucke*, *Drot*, are without doubt the prototypes of *Fairy*, *Elf*, *Wight*, *Dwarf*, *Mare*, *Puck*, and *Trot*.

even introduced into our own country at an epoch as remote as the year 1013. The metrical fragments of Thiodolf, bard to Harold Fairhair, who ascended the throne of Norway in 863, bear testimony to the first of these assertions. Thiodolf was an antiquary of such pre-eminence, that on his poetry was founded the early history of his country, and among the reliques of his composition is one recording an adventure of Svegger, the fourth King of Sweden, which clearly proves that *Fairies* and *Fairy-land* had even then become a portion of the popular creed. Svegger is represented as having made a vow to seek Fairy-land, and Odin, from whom he was descended. For this purpose he traverses, with twelve chosen companions, the wastes of the Greater Scythia; but, after consuming five years in vain in the pursuit, he returns home disappointed. In a second attempt, however, he is, unfortunately for himself, successful. In the east of Scythia rises suddenly from the plain so vast a mass of rock, that it assumes the appearance of an immense structure or palace. Passing by this pile with his friends, one evening after sunset, having freely enjoyed the pleasures of the banquet, Svegger was surprised to behold a *Dwergur*, a *Fairy* or *Dwarf*, sitting at the foot of the rock. Inflamed by wine, he and his companions boldly advanced towards the elf, who, then standing in the gates or portal of the pile, addressed the king, commanding him to enter if he wished to converse with Odin. The monarch, rushing forward, had scarcely passed the opening of the rock, when its portal closed upon him and the treacherous Fairy for ever! *

* "Votum ille (Sveggerus) nuncupavit, de Godheimo, vetustoque illo Othino quærendo. Duodecim viris comitatus, late per orbem vagabatur, delatusque in Tyrklandiam et in Svioniam Magnam, plurimos ibi reperit, sanguinis nexu sibi junctos. Huic peregrinatione quinque annos impendit, reduxque in Sveciam domi aliquam diu mansit. — Iterum Gudhemum quæsitum peregre profectus est Sveggerus. In orientali plaga Svioniæ villa est ingens, dicta Stein, ibique positus lapis tantæ molis; ut domum ingentem magnitudine æquet. Quadam vespera post solis occasum, a poculis ad lectum progressurus Sveggerus, vidit sub ingenti isto lapide sedentem pygmæum. Ille igitur ejusque comites, vino obruti, cum cursu lapidem petebant, in janua lapidis stans pygmæus, Sveggerum jubet ingredi, si cum Othino colloqui vellet. Currit Sveggerus in lapidam qui statim clauditur, nec rediit inde Sveggerus."— Snor. Sturl. Hist. Reg. Norv. op. Schöning. vol. i. p. 18.

That the diminutive Being here introduced was of the race of Fairies, subsequently described in the *Volupsa* of Sæmund under the appellation of Dueres or *Swart-Elves*, and who were placed under the direction of two superiors called *Motsogner* and *Durin**, is evident from the Gothic original of Thiodolf's fragment, which opens by declaring that this being who guarded the entrance of the enchanted cave, was one of the followers of *Durin*, who shrank from the light of day; and then immediately classes him with the Dueres †, an appellation which the Latin translators have rendered by the terms *pygmæi* and *nani*, *pygmies* and *dwarfs*.

That the fairy mythology of the Goths must have been known to this island about the year 1013, appears from a song composed by *Sigvatur*, who accompanied Canute to England as his favourite bard, on the invasion of his father Swain at the above era. *Sigvatur* describes himself as warned away from a cottage by its housewife, who, sitting at the threshold, vehemently forbids his approach, as she was preparing a propitiatory banquet of blood for the Fairies, with the view of driving the *war-wolf* from her doors. ‡ The word in the

* "Thar *Motsogner*
Mæstur vm ordenn
Dverga allra
En *Durenn* annar."

Volupsa, Stroph. 10.

There are two who possess sovereign power, *Motsogner*, who ranks first, and *Durin*, who otherwise acknowledges no peer.

† "Enn dagsciar,
Durins nithia,
Salvaur dudur,
Svegde velti;
Tha er ei Stein,
Hin storgethi:
Dulsa konur,
Ept *Dvergi* hliop:"

a passage which has been thus translated by Peringskiöld:—"At *lucifuga*, Nanorum domicilii custos, Svegderum decepit, quando magnanimus ille rex, spe vana delusus, *Nanum* sequendo, &c."—Yrling. Sag. cap. xv. p. 15.

‡ The original is thus interpreted by Snorro:—"Ad nos ethnicos ac iram Odini veritos servule ne ingrediaris, inquit vidua; mulier foeda me mordacibus verbis impetens, se intus

original here used for the Fairies, is *Alfa, Elves*, a designation which we shall find in the Edda applied generically to the whole tribe, however distinct in their functions or mode of existence.

Not only can we prove, indeed, the priority and high antiquity of the Gothic fairy superstitions on the unquestioned authority of Thiodolf and Sigvatur, but we can substantiate also the very material fact, that the scattered features of this mythology were collected and formed into a perfect system nearly a quarter of a century before any of the first crusaders could return to Europe. About the year 1077, *Sæmund* compiled the first or Metrical Edda, containing, among other valuable documents, the "*Voluspa*," a poem whose language indicates a very remote origin *, and where we find a minute and accurate description of the *Duergar* or Fairies, who are divided into two classes, of which the individuals are even carefully named and enumerated, a catalogue which is augmented in the *Prose Edda* composed by *Snorro* in 1215 †, and still further increased in the "*Scalda*," written, it is supposed, about a year or two afterwards.

Having thus endeavoured to show that the *Fairy Superstitions* of the Goths were possessed of an antiquity sufficiently great to have procured their propagation through the medium of Scandinavian conquest and colonisation, long anterior to any oriental source, and that the genius of eastern fabling, when subsequently introduced into the south, was of a character totally distinct from the popular superstition of the north of Europe, we hasten to place before the reader a short sketch of the genealogy, attributes, and offices of the Gothic

Alfs sacrificare dixit, foris vero lupis libare sanguinem mactatorum animalium." — Oläf. Helg. Haroldsons Saga. cap. 92. See also, Snorro apud Schöning, tom. ii. p. 124. Hafn. 1778.

* "*Sæmundus tantum*," says a learned commentator on the *Voluspa*, "*qui literas Latinas induxit in Islandiam, e literis Runicis, hæc poëmata in literaturam vulgarem transtulit, non composuit, ut ipsa monumenta testantur.*" — Gudm. Andr. Not. in *Volusp.* Stroph. vi.

† Two chapters of the Edda of Snorro, Myth. 13. 15. are occupied by an illustrative enumeration of these *Dvergi* or Fairies, and the "*Scalda*" has catalogued nearly one hundred of the same race.

elves, in order that we may compare them with their poetical offspring, the popular fairies of Britain, and thence be able to appreciate the various modifications and improvements which the system received from the creative imagination of Shakspeare.

Under the term *Norner* the ancient Goths included two species of preternatural beings of a diminutive size, the *Godar Norner*, or *Beneficent Elves*, and the *Illar Norner*, or *Malignant Elves*. Among the earliest bards of Scandinavia, in the *Voluspa*, and in the *Edda* of Snorro, these distinctions are accurately maintained, though under various appellations, either alluding to their habits, their moral nature, or their external appearance. The most common nomenclature, or division, however, was into *Liös-alfar*, or *Bright Elves*, and *Suart-alfar*, or *Dock-alfar* *Swart*, or *Black Elves*, the former belonging to the *Alfa-ættar*, or tribe of alfs, fauns, or elves, the latter to the *Duerga-ættar*, or tribe of *Dwarfs*. *

The *Alfs* and *Dwergs*, therefore, the *Fairies* and the *Dwarfs*, or, in other words, the *Bright* and the *Swart Elves* of Scandinavia form, together with a somewhat larger species which we shall have occasion shortly to mention, the whole of the machinery of whose origin we are in search.

Of this *Alfa-folch*, *Elfin-folk*, or *Fairy-people*, the *Liös-alfar*, or *Bright Elves*, were supposed to be ærial spirits, of a beautiful aspect, sporting in the purest ether, and inhabiting there a region called *Alf-heimur*, Elf-ham, or Elf-home. Their intercourse with mortals was always beneficent and propitious, and when they presided at a nativity, happiness and prosperity were their boon. * They visited

* "Sunt adhuc plures tales *Norner* ad hominum quemlibet in mundum natum venientes, ut dies illi determinent; harum quædam sunt divinæ, quædam ex faunorum (*Alfa ættar*) quædam ex nanorum genere (*Duerga ættar*).—*Nornæ bonæ* (*Godar Norner*) felicem tribuunt vitam, sed si quis sinistris premitur fatis, hoc malæ (*Illar Norner*) efficiunt. — Alia illic urbs *Alfheimur* vocatur (sc. faunorum mundus), quam incolunt illi qui *Liös-alfar* (sc. lucidi fauni) appellantur, sed *Döck-alfar* (sc. nigri fauni) viscera terræ inferiora tenent, et sunt prioribus illis valde dissimiles re et aspectu. *Liösalfi* sunt sole clariores; *Döckalfi* pice nigriores."—Resen. *Edda Island. Myth.* xv.

the cottages of the virtuous and industrious poor, blessing and assisting their efforts *, and danced in mazy rounds by moonlight on the dewy grass, to the sound of the most enchanting music, leaving on the sward circular and distinct traces of their footsteps of a beautiful and lively green, vestiges of what in the Swedish language was called the *Elf-dans*, a word which has been naturalised in our own tongue. † The bright elves were also considered as propitious to women in labour, and desirous of undertaking all the duties of the cradle ‡; in short, wherever a fairy of this species was found, whether in the palace, the cottage, or the mine, it was always distinguished by a series of kind or useful offices.

In almost every respect the reverse of this benevolent race were the *Suart-alfar*, or *Swart Elves*, who were neither spirits nor mortals, but of an intermediate nature, dwelling in the bowels of the earth, in mountains, caves, or barrows, of the same diminutive size as the bright elves, but unpleasing in their features, and though sometimes fair in their complexions, often dark and unlovely. § They were the

* “Sunt — *Nymphæ albæ* — *Dominæ bonæ*, Itali *Fatas*, Galli *Fees* vocant; quarum adventu multum prosperitatis et rerum omnium copiam putarunt superstitionis anus domibus contingere quas frequentarint, et ideo domi suæ illis epulas instruxere.” — Vide Kornmann *Templ. Natur.* part. iii. cons. 12. p. 113.

† “In multis locis *Septentrionalis regionis*, præsertim nocturno tempore, suum saltatorium orbem cum *omnium musarum consensu* versare solent. Sed post ortum solem quandoque roscidis deprehenduntur vestigiis. — Hunc nocturnum ludum vocant incolæ *Choream Elvarum*.” — Ol. Magn. Gent. Septent. lib. iii. c. 11. p. 107. *Chorea Elvarum* is here given as a translation of the *Elf-dans* of the Swedish language.

‡ “Fæminæ etiam parturientes olim hasce (sc. Godar Norner) precibus adibant ut facilius dolore ac onere levarentur; quemadmodum neque aniles fabulæ desunt vulgo de spectris sub mulierum specie sexui parturienti opem ferentibus.” — Keyser. de Mulierib. Fatid. sect. 23. p. 394.

§ “In the *Northern Regions*,” says Loier, speaking of the *Fairies*, “the report is, that they have a care, and doe diligently attend about little infantes lying in the cradle; that they doe dresse and undresse them in their swathling clothes, and doe performe all that which carefull nurses can doe unto their nurse-children.” — Peter le Loier, *Treatise of Strange Sights and Apparitions*, chap. ii. p. 19. 4to.

§ “*Swart-Alfar tenebrarum* spiritus; verum hæc species *Alforum* putata est non esse mere spiritus, nec nudi homines, sed *medium inter divos et mortales*.” — Comment in Volusp. (Str. xv.) ex Biblioth. Resenii.

dispensers of misfortune, and consequently their attendance at a birth became the harbinger of a predominating portion of * evil; mischief, indeed, either in sport or anger, seems to have been their favourite employment. They, like those of the more friendly tribe, visited the surface of the earth at midnight, but the circular tracery of their revels was distinguished from the green ringlets of the beneficent kind, by the ground being burnt and blasted wherever their footsteps had been impressed. †

Among this species was also classed the *Incubus*, by the Scandinavians termed *Mara*, *Meyar*, or the *Mare*; by the Saxons *Alf* or *Alp*; by the Franconians *Drud* ‡, a fairy who haunted those who slept, and oppressed them by sitting on their chest. This elf was likewise considered as exerting a baneful influence at *noon-time* over those who heedlessly gave themselves to sleep in the fields, and was deemed particularly dangerous, at this hour, to pregnant women. § To the mischievous power of these *Swart-elves* was also ascribed, by the Gothic nations, the loss or exchange of children, who were borne away from the parental roof previous to the rites of baptism, and oftentimes an idiotic or deformed bantling was substituted in the place of the stolen infant. || Generally were they found, indeed, spiteful and malicious in all their agency with mankind, whether in a playful or a serious mood; frequently injuring or destroying the

* Vide note in p. 308.

† “Quandoque vero saltum adeo profunde in terram impresserant, ut locus, cui assueverant, *insigni ardore* orbiculatim peresus, non parit arenti redivivum cespitem gramen.”—Ol. Magn. Gent. Sept. l. iii. c. 2.

‡ “A Matribus sive *Mair* descendunt aniles nugæ *von der Nachtmarr*, fæminei sexus spectrum credunt somniantes pondere suo gravans, ut arctius inclusus spiritus ægre possit meare. Angli adpellant *Nightmare*.—*Alp* et *Alf* enim veteribus notat dæmonem montanum. *Suecis* et *Anglis* *Elf* est Franconiæ incolis *Ephialtes* etiam est *die Drud*.”—Keysler de Mulierib. Fated. sect. 68. p. 497.

§ “Meridianum adpellabatur, quod meridie magis infestum credebatur, unde hodie observant, ut puerperas hora meridiana non sinant esse solas, aut camera exire.—Sæpe tamen etiam pro *ephialte* vel *Incubo* usurpatur.”—Keysler, sect. 68. p. 497.

|| “Eratque hoc larvarum genus apprime infestum—infantibus lactentibus cunis ad huc inhærentibus.”—Wier. De Præstig. Dæm. l. i. c. 16. p. 104.

cattle, riding the horses, plaiting their manes in knots, terrifying and leading wandering or benighted peasants astray, by voices, cries, by peals of laughter or delusive lights. *

With all these evil propensities, however, they are uniformly represented by our Northern ancestors as singularly ingenious, and endowed with great mechanical skill, particularly that variety of the *Suart-alfar* termed *Bergmanlein* or Mountain-dwarfs, who were believed to inhabit caves and mines and barrows†, and to be frequently and audibly employed in forging swords and armour of such excellent temper and strength as to be proof not only against the usual accidents of warfare, but against all the arts of magic and incantation. ‡ This craft was denominated *Duerga Smithi*, or *Fairy-Smithery*§, and was sometimes exercised in the formation of enchanted rings, and of automata which by the proper management of secret springs would transport their conductors through the air. || By the Swedes and Germans, also, these subterranean dwarfs, *virunculi montani*, were supposed to be sometimes busy in the laborious occupation of excavating the rocks, and to be occasionally useful to the miners in detecting latent veins of ore; but their agency was more generally deemed pernicious, and they were held to be the artificers of accident,

* “Sese velut umbras — ostendunt, risusque atque inanes cachinnos, ludicraque præstigia et alia infinita ludibria, quibus infelices decipiunt, vocali sono confingunt.” — Ol. Mag. De Gent. Septent. lib. vi. cap. 10.

“Dæmon in forma Viri Ignei, jam maximi, jam parvi sive *Virunculi*, noctu in campis oberrantis, et brevi hinc inde decurrentis, apparuit.” — Becker. Spectrol. p. 120.

† “Inter cætera mira quædam referuntur de *virunculis montanis*, quos *Bergmanlein* vocant, *nanorum forma et statura præditis*.” Vide Kircher. Mund. Subter. lib. viii. sect. 4. c. 4. p. 123.

“Alii nominant *virunculos montanos* — videntur autem esse seneciores, et vestiti more metallicorum, id est, vittato indusio, et corio circum lumbos dependente induti.” — Vide Agricola de Animant. Sub. c. 37. p. 78.

‡ “Sunt gladii, aliaque arma, omnium præstantissima, ab *Duergis* fabricata, quæ omnia penetrare, nec arte magica hebetari credebantur.” — Verel. in Hervar. Sag. cap. 7.

§ Vide Verel. in Hervar. Sag. voce *Duerga Smithi*.

|| See, in the Minor Voluspa, the *Hildi-svini* of Hyndla, a species of enchanted steed. Stroph. v. et vii.

the raisers of exhalations, and the exploders of the fire-damp. * It should also be added, that, as the frequent inmates of barrows and sepulchral vaults, they were considered as the guardians of hidden treasures, which they protected under the form of diminutive old men with corrugated faces †; while as the haunters of the mine, they affected the dress of the workmen, appearing in a shirt or frock, with a leathern apron. ‡

Beside these two species of the fairy tribe, the *Bright* and *Swart Elves*, a larger kind was acknowledged by the ancient Germans, under the appellations of *Guteli* and *Trulli*, who were esteemed not only harmless, but so friendly to mankind, that they delighted in performing the domestic offices of the household, such as cleaning the dishes, bringing in wood, grooming the horses, &c. §, labouring chiefly in the night-time, and often assuming the human stature, form, and garb. ||

Such are the leading features of the Fairy Mythology of the Goths, which appears to have been introduced into Britain as early as the eleventh century, and to have gradually become a part of the popular creed, though subsequently modified by the influence of Christianity, by the intermixture of classical associations, the prevalence of feudal manners, and other causes. Accordingly, we find Gervase of Tilbury, in the thirteenth century, detailing, in his *Otia Imperialia*, many of the peculiar superstitions of the Scandinavian system as

* "Columnas frangendo—vel casu petrarum, fractione scalarum, provocatione fætorum, suffocatione ventorum, ruptura funiculorum, opprimunt aut conturbant."—Ol. Magn. de Gent. Septentr. lib. vi. cap. 10.

† They are sometimes represented as coining the money which they conceal or guard, "in pecunia abundant, *quam cudunt ipsimet*."—Theophr. Philos. Sag. lib. i. p. 591. ed. Gen. 1658.

‡ "Corio circumlumbos dependente."—Vide note † in p. 311.

§ "Trulli, et Guteli; qui et in famulatio viris et sceminis inserviunt conclavia scopis purgant, *patinas mundant, ligna portant, equos curant*."—Vide Tholossani, lib. vii. cap. 14.

|| "In *effigie humana*," says Olaus Magnus, "accommodare solent ministeriis hominum, nocturnis horis laborando, equosque et jumenta curando."—De Gent. Sept. lib. iii. c. 11. p. 107.

common to this country; and in the following age, Chaucer, impressed with the high antiquity of these fables, refers even to the age of Arthur as the period of their full dominion :—

“ In old Dayes of the King Artour
Of which that Bretons speken gret honour,
All was this Lond fulfilled of Faerie,
The Elf-Quene with hire jolie company
Daunsed full oft in many a grene mede,
This was the old opinion as I rede.
I speke of many hundred yeres agoe.” *

After the death of Chaucer, indeed, who treated these beautiful credulities with a pleasant vein of ridicule, the fate of the Gothic System of Fairies seems to have been considerably different in two opposite quarters of our island; for, while in Scotland the original character of this mythology, and especially that of its harsher features, was closely preserved, it received in England, and principally through the medium of our great dramatic bard, a milder aspect, and a more fanciful and sportive texture. The dissimilarity thus resulting has been noticed by a late elegant tourist, who observes, that “the Scottish Fairy is described with more terrific attributes than are to be found in the traces of a belief in such beings in England †;” a remark which is corroborated by Mr. Scott, who, after noticing this stricter retention of the ancient character of the Gothic Fairy in North Britain, assigns two causes for its occurrence, the enmity of the Presbyterian clergy to this supposed “*light infantry of Satan*,” and the aspect of the country, “as we should naturally attribute,” he adds, “a less malicious disposition, and a less frightful appearance, to the fays who glide by moon-light through the oaks of Windsor, than to those who haunt the solitary heaths and lofty mountains of the North.” ‡ In fact, while the English, through Shakspeare, seem chiefly to have adopted and improved that part of the Gothic Mytho-

* Chaucer apud Chalmers, English Poets, vol. i. p. 51. col. 1.

† Stoddart's Remarks on Local Scenery and Manners in Scotland, vol. ii. p. 66.

‡ Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, 1st edit. vol. ii. p. 213.

logy which relates to the *Bright* or *Benignant* race of Fairies, the Scotch have, with few exceptions, received and fostered that wilder and more gloomy portion of the creed which developes the agency and disposition of the *Swart* or *Malignant* tribe. A short detail, therefore, of the two systems, as they appear to have existed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, if compared with the features of the Scandinavian Mythology which we have just enumerated, will exhaust the subject of our present enquiry, placing the sources of our popular superstitions on these topics, and the poetical embellishments of Shakspeare, in a perspicuous point of view.

Of the *Scottish Elves*, two kinds have been uniformly handed down by tradition, the *Fair* and the *Swart*, but both are alike represented as prone to evil, and analogous therefore to the *Illar Norner*, or *Evil Fairies* of the Scandinavians. They were also often termed the *Good Neighbours* or *People*, as a kind of deprecatory compliment, in order to soften and appease the malignancy of their temper.* In a rare treatise written towards the close of the seventeenth century, by Mr. Robert Kirk, minister at Aberfoill, and entitled, "The Nature and Actions of the Subterranean, and for the most part, Invisible People, heretofore going under the Name of *Elves*, *Faunes*, and *Fairies*, or the lyke, &c. &c. †," a very curious detail is given of the

* "Perhaps this epithet," says Mr. Scott, "is only one example, among many, of the extreme civility which the vulgar in Scotland use towards spirits of a dubious, or even a determinedly mischievous nature. The arch-fiend himself is often distinguished by the softened title of the "good-man." This epithet, so applied, must sound strange to a southern ear; but, as the phrase bears various interpretations, according to the places where it is used, so, in the Scottish dialect, the *good man of such a place*, signifies the tenant, or life-renter, in opposition to the laird, or proprietor. Hence, the devil is termed the good-man, or tenant, of the infernal regions. There was anciently a practice in Scottish villages, of propitiating this infernal being, by leaving uncultivated a croft, or small inclosure, of the neighbouring grounds, which was called the *good-man's croft*. By doing so, it was their unavowed, but obvious intention, to avert the rage of Satan from destroying their possessions."—*Minstrelsy*, vol. ii. p. 216.

† Of this curious work, a hundred copies of which have lately been reprinted, the first title is termed, "An Essay on the Nature," &c.; and the second "SECRET COMMON-WEALTH; or, A Treatise displaying the Chief Curiosities as they are in Use among

Fairy Superstitions of Scotland, as they have prevailed in that country, from the earliest period to the year 1690, a work which we may safely take as our text and guide in delineating the character of the *Scottish Fairy*, as it existed in the days of Shakspeare.

To the gloomy and unhallowed *nature* and *disposition* of these North British Elves, Mr. Kirk bears the most unqualified testimony:—“These *Siths* or Fairies,” he observes, “they call *Sleagh Maith*, or the *Good People*, it would seem, to prevent the dint of their *ill Attempts*, (for the Irish use to bless all they fear Harme of;) and are said to be of a middle Nature betuixt Man and Angel, as were Dæmons thought to be of old;—they are said to have no discernible Religion, Love, or Devotion towards God, the blessed Maker of all: they disappear whenever they hear his Name invocked, or the Name of Jesus, nor can they act ought at that Time after hearing of that sacred Name.—Some say their *continual Sadnesse* is because of their pendulous state, as uncertain what at the last Revolution will become of them, when they are locked up into ane unchangeable Condition; and if they have any frolic Fitts of Mirth, ’tis as the constrained grinning of a Mort-head, or rather as acted on a stage, and moved by another, ther (than?) cordially comeing of themselves.”*

Of their *dress* and *weapons* he gives us the following account:—“Their Apparell is like that of the People and Countrey under which they live: so are they seen to wear Plaids and variegated Garments in the Highlands of Scotland, and Suanochs therefore in Ireland.”† —“Their Weapons are most what solid earthly Bodies, nothing of Iron, but much of Stone, like to yellow, soft Flint-spa, shaped like a barbed Arrow-head, but flung like a Dairt, with great force. These Armes (cut by Airt and Tools it seems beyond humane) have somewhat of the Nature of Thunderbolt subtilty, and mortally wounding the vital Parts without breaking the skin.”‡

diverse of the People of Scotland to this Day; — SINGULARITIES for the most Part peculiar to that Nation.” 4to. 1691.

* Kirk’s Essay, pp. 1. 7, 8, 9, reprint. † Ibid. p. 6. ‡ Ibid. p. 10.

This description of the weapons, garb, disposition, and nature of the Gaelic, Highland, or Scoto-Irish Fairies, equally applies to the more elegant race which haunted the cheerful and cultivated districts of Caledonia; for Mr. Cromek, painting the character of the Scottish Lowland Fairies, from the popular belief of Nithsdale and Galloway, tinges it with the same fearful attributes and mischievous propensities: — “ They were small of stature,” he relates, “ exquisitely shaped and proportioned; of a fair complexion, with long fleeces of yellow hair flowing over their shoulders, and tucked above their brows with combs of gold. A mantle of green cloth, inlaid with wild flowers, reached to their middle; — green pantaloons, buttoned with bobs of silk, and sandals of silver, formed their under dress. On their shoulders hung quivers of adder slough, stored with pernicious arrows; and bows, fashioned from the rib of a man, buried where *three Lairds’ lands meet*, tipped with gold, ready bent for warfare, were slung by their sides. Thus accoutred they mounted on steeds, whose hoofs would not print the new plowed land, nor dash the dew from the cup of a hare-bell. They visited the flock, the folds, the fields of coming grain, and the habitations of men; — and woe to the mortal whose frailty threw him in their power! — A flight of arrows, tipped with deadly plagues, were poured into his folds; and nauseous weeds grew up in his pastures; his coming harvest was blighted with pernicious breath, — and whatever he had no longer prospered. These fatal shafts were formed of the bog reed, pointed with white field flint, and dipped in the dew of hemlock. They were shot into cattle with such magical dexterity that the smallest aperture could not be discovered, but by those deeply skilled in fairy warfare, and in the cure of elf-shooting. Cordials and potent charms are applied; the burning arrow is extracted, and instant recovery ensues. The fairies seem to have been much attached to particular places. A green hill; — an opening in a wood; — a burn just freeing itself from the Uplands, were kept sacred for revelry and festival. The Ward-law, an ever green hill in Dalswinton Barony, was, in olden days, a noted Fairy tryste. But the Fairy ring being

converted into a pulpit, in the times of persecution, proscribed the revelry of unchristened feet. Lamentations of no earthly voices were heard for years around this beloved hill." *

The latter part of this quotation alludes to a very prominent part of Scottish fairy superstition, the *haunts* or *habitations* of the *Elf-folk*, and their *Court* or *Fairy-land*, a species of fiction which, as we have seen, makes a striking figure in the Scandinavian mythology, and probably furnished Chaucer with his adventure of † *Sir Thopas*. The *local appropriation* of Fairies, however, though common enough in England, has been more minutely marked and described in Scotland. Green hills, mountain-lakes, romantic glens, and inaccessible falls of water, were more peculiarly their favourite haunts, whilst the wilderness or forest wild was deemed the regular entrance to *Elf-land* or the Court of Faery. "There be many Places," says Kirk, "called Fairie-hills, which the Mountain People think impious and dangerous to peel or discover, by taking earth or wood from them;" and, speaking in another place of their habitations, he adds, they "are called large and fair, and (unless att some odd occasions) unperceaveable by vulgar eyes, like Rachland and other enchanted Islands, having fir Lights, continual Lamps, and Fires, often seen

* Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song, 8vo. 1810. pp. 295, 296, 297.

† The resemblance between the search of Svegder for Godheim or Fairy-land, and the object of Sir Thopas's expedition, cannot but strike the reader; —

" In his sadel he clombe anon,
And pricked over stile and ston
An elf quene for to espie;
Til he so long had riden and gone
That he fond, in a *privie wone*,
The countree of *Faërie*.

Wherein he saughte north and south,
And often spired with his mouth,
In many a *foreste wilde*;
For in that countree nas ther non,
That to him dorst ride or gon,
Neither wif ne childe."

Cant. Tales, apud Tyrwhitt, v. 13726.

without Fuel to sustain them," confirming the account by the instance of a female neighbour of his, who, being conveyed to Elf-land, "found the Place full of Light, without any Fountain or Lamp from whence it did spring."*

"Lakes and pits, on the tops of mountains," remarks Dr. Leyden, were "regarded with a degree of superstitious horror, as the porches or entrances of the subterraneous habitations of the fairies; from which confused murmurs, the cries of children, moaning voices, the ringing of bells, and the sounds of musical instruments, are often supposed to be heard. Round these hills, the green fairy circles are believed to wind, in a spiral direction, till they reach the descent to the central cavern; so that, if the unwary traveller be benighted on the charmed ground, he is inevitably conducted, by an invisible power, to the fearful descent."†

That a similar partiality was shown by these fairy people to the site of secluded waterfalls, is recorded in the Statistical Account of Scotland, where the minister of Dumfries, after describing a Linn formed by the water of the Crichup, as inaccessible to real beings, observes, that it had anciently been "considered as the habitation of imaginary ones; and at the entrance into it there was a curious Cell or Cave, called the *Elf's Kirk*, where, according to the superstition of the times, the imaginary inhabitants of the Linn were supposed to hold their meetings."‡

But, independent of these numerous occasional residences of the fairy tribe, a firm belief in the existence of a fixed court, or *Elf-land* peculiarly so denominated, as the centre of their empire and the abode of their Queen, was so prevalent in Scotland, during the sixteenth century, as to have been acted upon in a court of justice. A woman named *Alison Pearson* having been convicted, on the 28th of May, 1586, of holding intercourse with and visiting the Queen of

* Essay, pp. 5. 12. 18.

† "Scenes of Infancy: descriptive of Teviotdale," 1st edit. 12mo. p. 161.

‡ Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. xiii. p. 245.

Elf-land; "for hanting and repairing," says the indictment, "with the gude neighbours, and Queene of Elfland, thir divers years by past, as she had confest; and that she had friends in that court, which were of her own blude, who had gude acquaintance of the Queene of Elfland, — and that she was seven years ill handled in the Court of Elfland *," and for this notable crime was the poor creature burnt to death!

When such was the credulity of a bench of judges, we need not wonder that Fairy Land had become a professed article of the poetical creed, and that Lindsay in 1560, and Montgomery in 1584, should allude to it as a subject of admitted notoriety: thus the former, in his *Complaynt of the Papingo*, says

" Bot sen my spreit mon from my bodye go,
I recommend it to the Quene of Fary,
Eternally into her court to tarry
In wilderness among the holtis hair;" †

and the latter, in his *Flyting against Polwart*, speaking of Hallow'een, tells us, that

" The king of Pharie and his court, with the elf queen,
With many elfish incubus was ridand that night." ‡

According to the *Tale of the Young Tamlane*, a poem in its original state coeval with the *Complaynt of Scotland*, and on the authority of the *Ballad of Thomas the Rhymer*, said also to be of considerable antiquity §, Elf-land is represented as a terrestrial paradise, the opening of the road to which was in the desert

" Where living land was left behind;"

it is described as a "bonny road" "that winds about the fernie brae,"

* Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, vol. ii. p. 206. 1st edit.

† Lindsay's Works, 1592, p. 222.

‡ Watson's Collection of Scots Poems, 1709, part iii. p. 12.

§ Vide Scott's Minstrelsy, vol. ii. p. 250. note.

but the roaring of the sea is heard in the descent, and at length the traveller wades knee-deep through rivers of blood,

“ For a’ the blude that’s shed on earth,
Rins thro’ the springs o’ that countrie;” *

yet, when arrived, the land is full of pleasantness, a garden of the loveliest green, self-illuminated, and whose halls have roofs of beaten gold, and floors of purest chrystal. †

In conformity to these Scottish traditionary features of Fairy-land, and in reference to the popular tale of Thomas the Rhymer, who, daring to salute the Fairy Queen, was carried off in early life to this region of enchantment, and there broke the vow of silence enjoined on all who entered its precincts ‡, Dr. Leyden has executed the following glowing picture: —

“ The fairy ring-dance now, round Eildon-tree,
Moves to wild strains of elfin minstrelsy :
On glancing step appears the fairy queen ; —
Or, graceful mounted on her palfrey gray,
In robes, that glisten like the sun in May,
With hawk and hounds she leads the moon-light ranks,
Of knights and dames, to Huntly’s ferny banks,
Where Rymour, long of yore, the nymph embraced,
The first of men unearthly lips to taste.
Rash was the vow, and fatal was the hour,
Which gave a mortal to a fairy’s power !
A lingering leave he took of sun and moon ;
— Dire to the minstrel was the fairy’s boon ! —
A sad farewell of grass and green-leaved tree,
The haunts of childhood doomed no more to see.
Through winding paths, that never saw the sun,
Where Eildon hides his roots in caverns dun,
They pass, — the hollow pavement, as they go,
Rocks to remurmuring waves, that boil below ;

* Thomas The Rhymer, part i., Scott’s Minstrelsy, vol. ii. pp. 253, 254.

† Tale of the Young Tamlane, Minstrelsy, vol. ii. p. 235.

‡ “ If you speak word in Elflin land,
Ye’ll ne’er get back to your ain countrie.”

Thomas the Rhymer ; Minstrelsy, vol. ii. p. 253.

Silent they wade, where sounding torrents lave
 The banks, and red the tinge of every wave;
 For all the blood, that dyes the warrior's hand,
 Runs through the thirsty springs of Fairy land.
 Level and green the downward region lies,
 And low the cieling of the fairy skies;
 Self-kindled gems a richer light display
 Than gilds the earth, but not a purer day.
 Resplendent crystal forms the palace wall;
 The diamonds trembling lustre lights the hall:
 But where soft emeralds shed an umber'd light,
 Beside each coal-black courser sleeps a knight;
 A raven plume waves o'er each helmed crest,
 And black the mail, which binds each manly breast,
 Girt with broad faulchion, and with bugle green —
 Ah! could a mortal trust the fairy queen!
 From mortal lips an earthly accent fell,
 And Rymour's tongue confess'd the numbing spell:
 In iron sleep the minstrel lies forlorn,
 Who breathed a sound before he blew the horn.”*

* Scenes of Infancy, book ii. pp. 71—73. This poem abounds in passages of exquisite pathos and splendid imagination. The book, whence the lines just quoted are taken, closes with the following apostrophe to Mr. Scott: —

“ O Scott! with whom, in youth's serenest prime,
 I wove, with careless hand, the fairy rhyme,
 Bade chivalry's barbaric pomp return,
 And heroes wake from every mouldering urn!
 Thy powerful verse, to grace the courtly hall,
 Shall many a tale of elder time recall,
 The deeds of knights, the loves of dames, proclaim,
 And give forgotten bards their former fame.
 Enough for me, if Fancy wake the shell,
 To eastern minstrels strains like thine to tell;
 Till saddening memory all our haunts restore,
 The wild-wood walks by Esk's romantic shore,
 The circled hearth, which ne'er was wont to fail
 In cheerful joke, or legendary tale,
 Thy mind, whose fearless frankness nought could move,
 Thy friendship, like an elder brother's love,
 While from each scene of early life I part,
 True to the beatings of this ardent heart,
 When, half-deceased, with half the world between,
 My name shall be unmentioned on the green,

No spell, however, could bind the Fairies themselves to their own domain; an eternal restlessness seems to have been their doom; "they remove," says Kirk, in a passage singularly curious, "to other Lodgings at the Beginning of each Quarter of the Year, so traversing till Doomsday, being impotent and (*impotent of?*) staying in one Place, and finding some Ease by so purning (*journeying*) and changing Habitations. Their chamœlion-lyke Bodies swim in the Air near the Earth with Bag and Bagadge; and at such revolution of Time, SEERS, or MEN OF THE SECOND SIGHT, (Fœmales being seldome so qualified) have very terrifying Encounters with them, even on High Ways; who therefoir usually shune to travell abroad at these four Seasons of the Year, and thereby have made it a Custome to this day among the Scottish-Irish to keep Church duely evry first Sunday of the Quarter to sene or hallow themselves, their Corns and Cattell, from the Shots and Stealth of these wandering Tribes; and many of these superstitious People will not be seen in Church againe till the nixt Quarter begin, as if no Duty were to be learned or done by them, but all the use of Worship and Sermons were to save them from these Arrows that fly in the dark." *

Beside these quarterly migrations, an annual procession of the Fairy Court was supposed to take place on Hallowe'en, to which we have alluded in a former part of this work (vol. i. p. 342.), when describing the superstitions peculiar to certain periods of the year. A similar ceremony, though not upon so large a scale, was also believed, among the peasantry of Nithsdale, to occur at † Roodsmass;

When years combine with distance, let me be,
By all forgot, *remembered yet by thee!*"

If Mr. Scott, yielding to this appeal, would present us with a complete edition of the poetical works, together with a life, of his lamented friend, who was not less remarkable for his learning than his genius, he would confer no trifling obligation on the literary world.

* Kirk's Essay on Fairies, pp. 2, 3.

† A remarkable instance of the continuance of this superstition, even in the present day, is recorded by Mr. Cromek, to whom an old woman of Nithsdale gave the following detail, "with the artless simplicity of sure belief." "I the night afore Roodsmass," said

but the most common appearance of the Fairy in Scotland, as elsewhere, was conceived to be by moon-light, dancing in a circle, and leaving behind either a scorched, or a deep green, ringlet; nor was the period of noon-day scarcely deemed less dangerous than the noon of night; for, during both, the Fairies were imagined to exert a baneful power; in sleep, producing the oppression termed the *Nightmare* *, and, even at mid-day, weaving their pernicious spells, and subjecting to their power all who were tempted to repose on the rock, bank, hillock, or near the tree which they frequented.

Persons thus unfortunately situated, who had ventured within the fairy-circle after sunset, who had slept at noon upon a fairy-hill, or who, in an evil hour, had been devoted to the infernal powers, by the curses of a parent, were liable to be borne away to Elf-land for a period of seven years :—

“ Woe to the upland swain, who, wandering far,
The circle treads, beneath the evening star!
His feet the witch-grass green impels to run,
Full on the dark descent, he strives to shun;
Till, on the giddy brink, o’erpower’d by charms,
The Fairies clasp him, in unhallow’d arms,

she, “ I had trysted wi’ a neeber lass, a Scots mile frae hame, to talk anent buying braws i’ the fair: — we had nae sutten lang aneath the haw-buss, till we heard the loud laugh o’ fowk riding, wi’ the jingling o’ bridles, an’ the clanking o’ hoofs. We banged up, thinking they wad ryde owre us; — we kent nae but it was drunken fowk riding to the fair, i’ the fore night. We glowred roun’ and roun’, an’ sune saw it was the *Fairie fowk’s Rade*. We cowered down till they passed by. A leam o’ light was dancing owre them, mair bonnie than moon-shine: they were a wee, wee fowk, wi’ green scarfs on, but ane that rade foremost, an’ that ane was a gude deal larger than the lave, wi’ bonnie lang hair bun’ about wi’ a strap, whilk glented lyke stars. They rade on braw wee whyte naigs, wi’ unco lang swooping tails, an’ manes hung wi’ whistles that the win’ played on. This, an’ their tongue when they sang, was like the soun of a far awa Psalm. Marion an’ me was in a brade lea fiel’ whare they cam by us, a high hedge o’ hawtrees keep it them frae gaun through Johnnie Corrie’s corn; — but they lap a’ owre’t like sparrows, an’ gallop’t into a greene knowe beyont it. We gade i’ the morning to look at the tredded corn, but the fient a hoof mark was there, nor a blade broken.” — *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*, pp. 298, 299.

* Vide *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, vol. ii. p. 214.; and *Tyrwhitt’s Note on Canterbury Tales*, v. 6457.

Doom'd, with the crew of restless foot, to stray
 The earth by night, the nether realms by day;
 Till seven long years their dangerous circuit run,
 And call the wretch to view this upper sun." *

Pregnant and child-bed women were considered, as in Germany, peculiarly in danger of being stolen by the Fairies at noon-day, and various preventive charms were adopted against this abstraction. "The Tramontains to this day," says Kirk, speaking of "Women yet alive, who tell they were taken away when in Child-bed to nurse Fairie Children," "put bread, the Bible, or a piece of Iron, in Women's Bed when travelling, to save them from being thus stolen." †

Of the capture and subjection of those who had been devoted by execration, several instances are related both by Scotch and English writers ‡; but the most general mode of abstraction practised by the Elvish race, was that of stealing or exchanging children, and so commonly was this species of theft apprehended in the Highlands of Scotland, that it was customary to watch children until the christening was over §, under the idea, that the power of the Fairies, owing to the original corruption of human nature, was chiefly to be dreaded

* Leyden's *Scenes of Infancy*, p. 24.

† Kirk's *Essay on Fairies*, pp. 5, 6.

‡ Thus Gervase of Tilbury tells us, that one *Peter De Cabinam* residing in a city of Catalonia, being teased by his daughter, wished in his passion, that the devil might take her, when she was instantly borne away. "About seven years afterwards, an inhabitant of the same city, passing by the mountain (adjacent to it), met a man who complained bitterly of the burthen he was constantly forced to bear. Upon enquiring the cause of his complaining, as he did not seem to carry any load, the man related, that he had been unwarily devoted to the spirits by an execration, and that they now employed him constantly as a vehicle of burden." As a proof of his assertion, he added, that "the daughter of his fellow citizen was detained by the spirits, but that they were willing to restore her, if her father would come and demand her on the mountain. *Peter de Cabinam*, on being informed of this, ascended the mountain to a lake (on its summit), and, in the name of God, demanded his daughter; when a tall, thin, withered figure, with wandering eyes, and almost bereft of understanding, was wafted to him in a blast of wind." — Scott's *Minstrelsy*, vol. ii. pp. 181, 182.

§ See Pennant's *Tour in Scotland*, 8vo. 1769.

in the interval between birth and baptism. The Beings substituted for the healthy offspring of man were apparently idiots, monstrous and decrepid in their form, and defective in speech; and when the Fairies failed to purloin or exchange the infant, in consequence of the vigilance of its parents, it was usually found *breath-blasted*, "their unearthly breath making it wither away in every limb and lineament, like a blighted ear of corn, saving the countenance, which unchangeably retains the sacred stamp of divinity." *

The cause assigned for this evil propensity on the part of the Fairies, was the dreadful obligation they were under, of sacrificing the tenth individual to the Devil every, or every seventh year; "the teind of them," says the indictment of Alison Pearson, "are tane to hell everie year†," while the hero of the Ballad entitled *The Young Tamlane*, exclaims:—

"And pleasant is the Fairy land;

But, an eiry tale to tell!

Ay, at the end o' seven years,

We pay the teind to hell." ‡

For the recovery of the unfortunate substitutes thus selected for the payment of their infernal tribute, various charms and contrivances were adopted, of which one of the most effectual, though the most horrible, was the assignment to the flames of the supposed changeling, which it was firmly believed would, in consequence of this treatment, disappear, and the real child return to the lap of its mother. "A beautiful child, of Caerlaveroc, in Nithsdale," relates Mr. Cromeck from tradition, "on the second day of its birth, and before its baptism, was changed, none knew how, for an antiquated elf of hideous aspect. It kept the family awake with its nightly yells; biting the mother's breasts, and would neither be cradled or

* Cromeck on Nithsdale and Galloway Song, p. 307.

† *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, vol. ii. p. 208.

‡ *Scott's Minstrelsy*, vol. ii. p. 238.

nursed. The mother, obliged to be from home, left it in charge to the servant girl. The poor lass was sitting bemoaning herself, — ‘Wer’t nae for thy girning face I would knock the big, winnow the corn, and grun the meal!’ — ‘Lowse the cradle band,’ quoth the Elf, ‘and tent the neighbours, an’ Ill work yere wark.’ Up started the elf, the wind arose, the corn was chaffed, the outlyers were foddered, the hand mill moved around, as by instinct, and the *knocking mell* did its work with amazing rapidity. The lass, and her elfin servant, rested and diverted themselves, till, on the mistress’s approach, it was restored to the cradle, and began to yell anew. The girl took the first opportunity of slyly telling her mistress the adventure. ‘*What ’ll we do wi’ the wee diel?*’ said she. ‘I’ll wirk it a pirn,’ replied the lass. At the middle hour of night the chimney-top was covered up, and every inlet barred and closed. The embers were blown up until glowing hot, and the maid, undressing the elf, tossed it on the fire. It uttered the wildest and most piercing yells, and, in a moment, the Fairies were heard moaning at every wonted avenue, and rattling at the window boards, at the chimney head, and at the door. ‘In the name o’God bring back the bairn,’ cried the lass. The window flew up; the earthly child was laid unharmed on the mother’s lap, while its grisly substitute flew up the chimney with a loud laugh.” *

Another efficacious mode of re-possession either children or adults who had been borne away by the Fairies, depended upon watching their great annual procession or *rade* on Hallowe’en, within a year and a day of the supposed abstraction, and there seizing by force the hapless victim of their charms. This enterprise, however, which forms the chief incident in the *Tale of the Young Tamlane*, and has been mentioned in the first volume, required much courage and resolution for its successful performance, as the adventurer, regardless of all the terrors of the scene, and of all the appalling shapes which

* Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song, pp. 308, 309.

the lost person was compelled to assume, had to hold him fast, under every transformation, and until the resources of fairy magic were exhausted. Thus *Tamlane* exclaims: —

“ They’ll turn me in your arms, Janet,
An adder and a snake;
But had me fast, let me not pass,
Gin ye wad be my maik.

They’ll turn me in your arms, Janet,
An adder and an ask;
They’ll turn me in your arms, Janet,
A bale * that burns fast.

They’ll turn me in your arms, Janet,
A red hot gad o’ iron;
But had me fast, let me not pass,
For I’ll do you no harm. —

And next they’ll shape me in your arms,
A toad, but and an eel;
But had me fast, nor let me gang,
As you do love me weel.

They’ll shape me in your arms, Janet,
A dove, but and a swan;
And last they’ll shape me in your arms,
A mother-naked man:
Cast your green mantle over me —
I’ll be myself again.” — †

That part of the Scottish fairy system which relates exclusively to the abstraction of children, has been beautifully applied by Mr. Erskine, in one of his supplemental stanzas to Collins’s *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland*, where, continuing the Address of Collins to his friend Home, he thus proceeds: —

“ Then wake (for well thou can’st) that wond’rous lay,
How, while around the thoughtless matrons sleep,
Soft o’er the floor the treacherous fairies creep,
And bear the smiling infant far away:

* *Bale*. — A Faggot.

† *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, vol. ii. pp. 240, 241.

How starts the nurse, when, for her lovely child,
 She sees at dawn a gaping idiot stare !
 O snatch the innocent from demons vilde,
 And save the parents fond from fell despair !
 In a deep cave the trusty menials wait,
 When from their hilly dens, at midnight's hour,
 Forth rush the airy-elves in mimic state,
 And o'er the moon-light heath with swiftness scour :
 In glittering arms the little horsemen shine ;
 Last, on a milk-white steed, with targe of gold,
 A fay of might appears, whose arms entwine
 The lost, lamented child ! the shepherds bold
 The unconscious infant tear from his unhallow'd hold." *

Like the *Dwergar* or *Swart-Elves* of Scandinavia, the Scottish Fairies were also endowed with great mechanical powers ; were often mischievously, though sometimes beneficially, active in mines, and were believed to be the guardians of hidden treasure. " The Swart Fairy of the Mine," says the Scotch Encyclopedia, " has scarce yet quitted our subterraneous works †," and Kirk speaks of " Treasure hid in a Hill called *Sith-bhruaich*, or Fayrie-hill." ‡ It is amusing, indeed, to read the minute account which this worthy minister gives of the habits and occupations of his *Siths* or Fairies : thus, with regard to their *speech*, *food*, and *work*, he informs us that " they speak by way of whistling, clear, not rough" — " some are fed by only sucking into some fine spirituous Liquors, that peirce lyke pure Air and Oyl : others feid more gross on the Foyson or Substance of Corns and Liquors, or Corne itselſe that grows on the Surface of the Earth, which those Fairies steall away, partly invisible, partly preying on the Grain, as do Crowes and Mice : — their Food being exactly clean, and served up by pleasant children, lyke enchanted Puppets." " They are sometimes heard to bake Bread, strike Hammers, and to do such lyke Services within the litle Hillocks they most haunt. — Ther Women are said to Spine very fine, to Dy, to Tossue and

* See Collins's Poems, Sharpe's edition, pp. 106, 107, 108.

† Encyclopedia Britannica, in verbo.

‡ Essay on Fairies, p. 12.

Embroyder : but whither it be as manuell Operation of substantiall refined Stuffs, with apt and solid Instruments, or only curious Cobwebs, impalpable Rain-bows, and a phantastic Imitation of the actions of more terrestriall Mortalls, since it transcended all the Senses of the Seere to discern whither, I leave to conjecture as I found it." *

It appears, also, from the same author, that the operations of the Fairies were considered as predictive of future events, and that those who were gifted with the privilege of beholding the process, formed their inferences accordingly. Of this he gives us the following singularly terrific instance:—"Thus a Man of the Second Sight, perceaving the Operations of these forecasting invisible People among us, (indulged thorow a stupendious Providence to give Warnings of some remarkable Events, either in the Air, Earth, or Waters) told he saw a Winding-shroud creeping on a walking healthful Persons Legs till it come to the Kneee, and afterwards it come up to the Midle, then to the Shoulders, and at last over the Head, which was visible to no other Persone. And by observing the spaces of Time betwixt the severall Stages, he easily guess'd how long the Man was to live who wore the Shroud; for when it approached his Head, he told that such a Person was ripe for the Grave." †

Among the Scottish Fairies we must not forget to enumerate the *Wee Brown Man of the Muirs*, "a fairy," says Dr. Leyden, "of the most malignant order, the genuine *duergar* ‡," who dwelt beneath the heather bell, and whose favourite amusement it was to extract the brains from the skulls of those who slept within the verge of his power. §

* Essay on Fairies, pp. 1. 5. 7.

† Essay, pp. 11, 12.

‡ See Scott's *Minstrelsy*, vol. ii. p. 356.

§ "Brown dwarf, that o'er the muir-land strays,
Thy name to Keeldar tell." —

"*The Brown Man of the Muirs*, who stays
Beneath the heather bell."

Scott's *Minstrelsy*, vol. ii. p. 360.

Walsingham, says Dr. Leyden, mentions a story of an unfortunate youth, whose brains were extracted from his skull, during his sleep, by this malicious being. P. 356.

It is evident from the account now given of the Scottish Fairies, that they assimilate, in a very striking degree, in manners, disposition, and origin, with the *Duergar* or *Swart* tribe of the Scandick Elves ; but that a peculiarly wild, and even terrific malignancy forms and distinguishes their character and agency, ascribable, in a great measure, to the intermixture of a severe Christian theology, which attributes to these poetical little beings a species of demoniacal nature. It is also not less remarkable, that the only friendly and benignant Elf in the fairy annals of North Britain, though founded, in some respects, on the domestic fairy of Germany, and still more nearly assimilated to the *Portunus*, and the spirit *Grant* of Gervase of Tilbury, possesses some features altogether peculiar to the country of its birth. Kirk, among his “ fyve Curiosities in Scotland, not much observed elsewhere *,” reckons, in the first place, “ the Brounies, who in some Families are Drudges, clean the Houses and Dishes after all go to Bed, taking with him his Portion of Food, and removing befor Day-break.” †

Of this singular race there appears to have been two kinds, a diminutive and a gigantic species. King James, in his *Dæmonology*, published in 1597, tells us, that “ the spirit called *Brownie*, appeared like a *rough man*, and haunted divers houses without doing any evill, but doing as it were necessarie turnes up and downe the house ; yet some were so blinded as to beleeeve that their house was all the sonsier, as they called it, that such spirits resorted there ‡ ;” and

* Essay on Fairies, p. 37.

† Kirk, after mentioning as his fifth curiosity, “ A being Proof of Lead, Iron, and Silver,” adds the following curious notice of the strong attachment of the Scotch to music. “ Our Northern-Scotish, and our Athole Men are so much addicted to and delighted with Harps and Musick, as if, like King Saul, they were possessed with a forrein Spirit, only with this Difference, that Musick did put Saul’s Play-fellow a sleep, but roused and awaked our Men, vanquishing their own Spirits at Pleasure, as if they were impotent of its Powers, and unable to command it ; for wee have seen some poor Beggars of them, chattering their Teeth for Cold, that how soon they saw the Fire, and heard the Harp, leapt throw the House like Goats and Satyrs.” Pp. 37, 38.

‡ The Workes of King James, folio, 1616, p. 127.

Martin, speaking of the Isles of Shetland, remarks, that "a spirit by the country people called *Brownie*, was frequently seen in all the most considerable Families in these Isles and North of Scotland, in the shape of a *tall Man*." * To this description of Brownie, Milton seems to have been indebted for his "drudging Goblin:"—

"the lubbar-fiend,
 "Who' stretch'd out all the Chimney's length,
 Basks at the fire his hairy strength."

But the most common tradition with regard to the *Brownie* is, that, in point of size, he was similar to the *Fairy*, though in his habits, temper, and equipment, widely different. He possessed neither the weapons, nor the hostile inclinations of his brother Elves; he despised their gay attire, but was notorious for an attachment to dainty food, being the guardian of the Dairy, the avowed protector of the Bee, and a constant sharer in the product of its industry. He loved to lurk in hollow trees during the day, or in the recesses of some old mansion, to the family of which he would attach himself for centuries, and perform, for the menials, during the night, the most laborious offices.

The most ample and interesting account of this kind-hearted elf has been given to us, from tradition, by Mr. Cromek, who describes the Scotch Brownie as "small of stature, covered with short curly hair, with brown matted locks, and a brown mantle which reached to the knee, with a hood of the same colour." After having finished his nightly work, which was usually done by the crowing of the first cock, he would then, relates Mr. Cromek, "come into the farm-hall, and stretch itself out by the chimney, sweaty, dusty, and fatigued. It would take up the *pluff*, (a piece of bored bour-tree for blowing up the fire) and, stirring out the red embers, turn itself till it was rested and dried. A choice bowl of sweet cream, with combs of honey, was set in an accessible place: this was given as its hire; and it was

* Description of the Western Islands of Scotland, p. 334.

willing to be bribed, though none durst avow the intention of the gift. When offered meat or drink, the Brownie instantly departed, bewailing and lamenting itself, as if unwilling to leave a place so long its habitation, from which nothing but the superior power of fate could sever it. A thrifty good wife, having made a web of linsey-woolsey, sewed a well-lined mantle, and a comfortable hood, for her trusty Brownie. She laid it down in one of his favourite haunts, and cried to him to array himself. Being commissioned by the gods to relieve mankind under the drudgery of original sin, he was forbidden to accept of wages or bribes. He instantly departed, bemoaning himself in a rhyme, which tradition has faithfully preserved :—

“ A new mantle, and a new hood ! —
 Poor Brownie ! ye’ll ne’er do mair gude ! ”

“ The prosperity of the family seemed to depend on them, and was at their disposal. — A place, called Liethin Hall, in Dumfriesshire, was the hereditary dwelling of a noted Brownie. He had lived there, as he once communicated, in confidence, to an old woman, for three hundred years. He appeared only once to every new master, and, indeed, seldom showed more than his hand to any one. On the decease of a beloved master, he was heard to make moan, and would not partake of his wonted delicacies for many days. The heir of the land arrived from foreign parts, and took possession of his father’s inheritance. The faithful Brownie showed himself, and proffered homage. The spruce Laird was offended to see such a famine-faced, wrinkled domestic, and ordered him meat and drink, with a new suit of clean livery. The Brownie departed, repeating aloud and frequently these ruin-boding lines : —

“ Ca, cuttie, ca !
 A’ the luck o’ Liethin Ha’
 Gangs wi’ me to Bodsbeck Ha’.”

— “ Liethin Ha’ was, in a few years, in ruins, and ‘ bonnie Bodsbeck ’ flourished under the luck-bringing patronage of the Brownie. —

“ One of them, in the olden times, lived with Maxwell, Laird of Dalswinton, doing ten men’s work, and keeping the servants awake at nights with the noisy dirling of its elfin flail. The Laird’s daughter, says tradition, was the comeliest dame in all the holms of Nithsdale. To her the Brownie was much attached: he assisted her in love-intrigue, conveying her from her high-tower chamber to the trysting-thorn in the woods, and back again, with such light-heeled celerity, that neither bird, dog, nor servant awoke.

“ He undressed her for the matrimonial bed, and served her so handmaiden-like, that her female attendant had nothing to do not daring even to finger her mistress’s apparel, lest she should provoke the Brownie’s resentment. When the pangs of the mother seized his beloved lady, a servant was ordered to fetch the ‘cannie wife,’ who lived across the Nith. The night was dark as a December night could be; and the wind was heavy among the groves of oak. The Brownie, enraged at the loitering serving-man, wrapped himself in his lady’s fur-cloak; and, though the Nith was foaming high-flood, his steed, impelled by supernatural spur and whip, passed it like an arrow. Mounting the dame behind him, he took the deep water back again, to the amazement of the worthy woman, who beheld the red waves tumbling around her, yet the steed’s foot-locks were dry. ‘Ride nae by the auld pool,’ quo’ she, ‘lest we should meet wi’ Brownie.’ — He replied, ‘Fear nae, dame, ye’ve met a’ the Brownies ye will meet.’ — Placing her down at the hall gate, he hastened to the stable, where the servant-lad was just pulling on his boots; he unbuckled the bridle from his steed, and gave him a most afflicting drubbing. —

“ The Brownie, though of a docile disposition, was not without its pranks and merriment. The Abbey-lands, in the parish of New Abbey, were the residence of a very sportive one. He loved to be, betimes, somewhat mischievous. — Two lasses, having made a fine bowlful of buttered brose, had taken it into the byre to-sup, while it was yet dark. In the haste of concealment, they had brought but one spoon; so they placed the bowl between them, and took a spoon-

ful by turns. 'I hae got but three sups,' cried the one, 'an it's a' done !' 'It's a' done, indeed,' cried the other. 'Ha, ha !' laughed a third voice, 'Brownie has gotten the maist o't.' He had judiciously placed himself between them, and got the spoon twice for their once." *

The character and leading features of this benevolent Fairy, have been concentrated in the following beautiful stanza by Mr. Erskine, who, in supplying the omissions of Collins, thus supposes himself addressing the friend of that exquisite poet :—

" — See ! recall'd by thy resistless lay,
Once more the *Brownie* shews his honest face.
Hail, from thy wanderings long, my much lov'd sprite,
Thou friend, thou lover of the lowly, hail !
Tell in what realms thou sport'st thy merry night,
Trail'st thy long mop, or whirl'st the mimic flail,
Where dost thou deck the much-disordered hall,
While the tired damsel in Elysium sleeps,
With early voice to drowsy workman call,
Or lull the dame while mirth his vigils keeps ?
'Twas thus in Caledonia's domes, 'tis said,
Thou ply'dst the kindly task in years of yore :
At last, in luckless hour, some erring maid
Spread in thy nightly cell of viands store :
Ne'er was thy form beheld among their mountains more." †

From the thirteenth to the close of the sixteenth century, the *Fairy Mythology of England*, being derived from the same sources, and through the same medium as the *Scottish System*, which we have just delineated, the outlines of both will be found very similar. Thus in *Gervase of Tilbury*, in *Chaucer*, *Lydgate*, &c., even, with the exception of Spenser, down to R. Scot and *Warner*, whose "Albion's England" was printed, though not published, in 1586, the same ideas of fairy-land, the same infernal origin, and variety of species, the same mischievous and terrific character, and occasionally the same frolic and

* Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song, pp. 330, 331. et seq.

† Collins's Poems, Sharpe's edition, p. 105.

capricious wantonness, as the property of one particular *genus*, may be readily detected. * But in 1593, when the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* was presented to the public, nearly the whole of this Mythology which, as founded on the Scandick superstitions, had been, though with a few modifications, so long prevalent both in England and Scotland, seems to have received such vast additions from the plastic imagination of our bard, as, though rebuilt on the traditions of the "olden time," justly to merit, by their novelty and poetic beauty, the title of the *English System*, in contradistinction to that which still lingers in the wilds of Scotland.

The Fairies of Shakspeare have been truly denominated *the favourite children of his romantic fancy*, and, perhaps, in no part of his works has he exhibited a more creative and visionary pencil, or a finer tone of enthusiasm, than in bodying forth "these airy nothings," and in giving them, in brighter and ever-durable tints, once more

"A local habitation and a name."

Of his unlimited sway over this delightful world of ideal forms, no stronger proof can be given, than that he has imparted an entire new cast of character to the beings whom he has evoked from its bosom, purposely omitting the darker shades of their character, and, whilst throwing round them a flood of light, playful, yet exquisitely soft and tender, endowing them with the moral attributes of purity and benevolence. In fact, he not only dismisses altogether the *fairies of a malignant nature*, but clothes the milder yet mixed tribe of his predecessors with a more fascinating sportiveness, and with a much larger share of unalloyed goodness.

* That Warner's *Fairy-land* was in the infernal regions, is sufficiently proved from the following lines: —

"The *Elves*, and *Fairies*, taking fists,
Did hop a merrie round:
And *Cerberus* had lap enough:
And *Charon* leasure found."

Chalmers's English Poets, vol. iv. p. 458. col. 2.

The distinction between the two species he has accurately marked where *Puck*, under some apprehension, observes to *Oberon*, that the night is waning fast, that *Aurora's* harbinger appears, and that the "damned spirits all" are flitting to their beds, adding, that

"For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They wilfully themselves exile from light,
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night:"

to which *Oberon* immediately replies, —

"But we are spirits of another sort:
I with the morning's love have oft made sport;
And, like a forester, the groves may tread,
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt-green streams."*

Of the originality of Shakspeare in the delineation of this tribe of spirits, or Fairies, nothing more is required in proof, than a combination or grouping of the principal features; a picture which, when contrasted with the Scandick system and that which had been built upon it in England and Scotland previous to his own time, will sufficiently show with what grace, amenity, and beauty, and with what an exuberant store of novel imagery, he has decorated these phantoms of the Gothic mythology.

The King and Queen of Faiery, who, in Chaucer, are identified with the Pluto and Proserpina of hell †, are, under the appellations of

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. pp. 433, 434. Act iii. sc. 2.

† "Full often time he Pluto and his quene,
Proserpina, and alle hir Faerie,
Disporten hem and maken melodie." —

"Pluto, that is the king of Faerie,
And many a ladie in his compaignie
Folwing his wif, the quene Proserpina."

The Marchantes Tale, vide Chalmers's English Poets,
vol. i. p. 77. col. 1.; p. 78. col. 2.

Oberon and Titania *, drawn by Shakspeare in a very amiable and pleasing light ; for, though jealous of each other, they are represented as usually employed in alleviating the distresses of the worthy and unfortunate. Their benign influence, indeed, seems to have extended over the physical powers of nature ; for Titania tells her Lord, that, in consequence of their jealous brawls, a strange distemperature had seized the elements : —

“ The seasons alter ; hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose ;
And on old Hyem’s chin, and icy crown,
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set : The spring, the summer,
The chiding autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries ; and the ’mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which :
*And this same progeny of evils comes,
From our debate, from our dissention ;
We are their parents and original.”* †

It appears even that the fairy-practice of purloining children, which, in every previous system of this mythology, had been carried on from malignant or self-interested motives, was in Titania the result of humanity and compassion : thus, when Oberon begs her “ little changeling boy” to be his henchman, she answers —

“ ———— Set your heart at rest,
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a vot’ress of my order :
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip’d by my side ;
And sat with me on Neptune’s yellow sands,
Marking the embarked traders on the flood ;
When we have laugh’d to see the sails conceive,
And grow big-bellied, with the wanton wind :

* Oberon, or, more properly *Auberon*, has been derived, by some antiquaries, from “*l’aube du jour* ;” and *Mab* his Queen, from *amabilis*, so that *lucidity* and *amiability*, their characteristics, as delineated by Shakspeare, may be traced in their names.

† Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. iv. pp. 363 — 366. Act ii. sc. 2.

Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait,
 (Following her womb, then rich with my young squire)
 Would imitate; and sail upon the land,
 To fetch me trifles, and return again,
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandize.
 But she, *being mortal*, of that boy did die:
And, for her sake, I do rear up her boy:
And, for her sake, I will not part with him." *

The expression in this passage "being mortal," as applied to the changeling's mother, in contradistinction to the unchangeable state of the Fairies, may be added to Mr. Ritson's instances † as another *decisive proof of the immortality of Shakspeare's elves*; but when that commentator asserts, that the Fairies of the *common people* "were never esteemed otherwise," he has gone too far, at least if he meant to include the people of Scotland; for Kirk expressly tells us, that the Scottish Fairies are mortal: "they are not subject," he remarks, "to sore Sicknesses, but dwindle and decay at a certain Period, all about ane Age;" and still more decidedly has he remarked their destiny, in answer to the question, "at what Period of Time do they die?" — "They are," he replies, "of more refyn'd Bodies and Intellectualls then wee, and of far less heavy and corruptive Humours, (which cause a Dissolution) yet many of their Lives being dissonant to right Reason and their own Laws, and their Vehicles not being wholly frie of Lust and Passion, especially of the more spirituall and hautie Sins, they pass (*after a long healthy Lyfe*) into ane Orb and Receptacle fitted for their Degree, till they come under the general Cognizance of the last Day." ‡

Like the *Liös-alfar* or *Bright Elves* of the Goths, the Fairies of Shakspeare delighted in conferring blessings, in prospering the household, and in rendering the offspring of virtuous love, fortunate, fair, and free from blemish: thus the first fruit of the re-union of Oberon and Titania, is a benediction on the house of Theseus: —

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. pp. 367, 368. Act ii. sc. 2.

† The Quip Modest, 8vo. 1788, p. 12.

‡ Essay on Fairies, p. 8. and p. 44.

" Now thou and I are new in amity;
And will to-morrow midnight, solemnly,
Dance in duke Theseus' house triumphantly,
And bless it to all fair posterity; *

an intention which is carried into execution at the close of the play, where this kind and gentle race, entering the mansion at midnight —

" Hand in hand, with fairy grace,"—

receive the following directions from their benevolent monarch : —

" Now, until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessed be;
And the issue, there create,
Ever shall be fortunate.
And the blots of nature's hand
Shall not in their issue stand;
Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious, such as are
Despised in nativity,
Shall upon their children be. —
With this field-dew consecrate,
Every fairy take his gait;
And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace with sweet peace." †

How different this from the conduct and disposition of their brother elves of Scotland, of whom Kirk tells us, that "they are ever readiest to go on hurtfull Errands, but seldom will be the Messengers of great Good to Men." ‡

But not only were the Fairies of our bard the friends and protectors of virtue, they were also the punishers of guilt and sensuality; and, contrary to the then commonly entertained ideas of their infernal origin,

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 448. Act iv. sc. 1.

† Ibid. vol. iv. pp. 495, 496. Act v. sc. 2.

‡ Essay on Fairies, pp. 7, 8.

and anti-christian habits, were the avowed patrons of piety and prayer :
 " Go you," exclaims the personifier of one of these tiny moralists, addressing his companions, " black, grey, green and white,"

—————" Go — and where you find a maid,
 That, ere she sleep, has thrice her prayers said,
 Raise up the organs of her fantasy,
 Sleep she as sound as careless infancy;
 But those as sleep, and think not on their sins,
 Pinch them, arms, legs, backs, shoulders, sides, and shins —
 But, stay; I smell a man of middle earth : —
 With trial-fire touch me his finger-end :
 If he be chaste, the flame will back descend,
 And turn him to no pain; but if he start,
 It is the flesh of a corrupted heart :"

on the proof of his iniquity, they proceed to punishment, pinching him, and singing in scorn,

" Fye on sinful fantasy !
 Fye on lust and luxury !" &c.*

This love of virtue, and abhorrence of sin, were, as attributes of the Fairies, in a great measure, if not altogether, the gifts of Shakspeare, at least if we regard their mythology at that time prevalent in Britain, whether we refer to the Scottish system, or to that which existed among our own poets from Chaucer to Warner, though our familiarity with the picture is now such, owing to the popularity of the original artist and the consequent number of his copyists on the same subject, that we assign it a date much anterior to its real source.

If the moral and benevolent character of these children of fancy be, in a great degree, the creation of Shakspeare, the imagery which he has employed in describing their persons, manners, and occupations, will be deemed not less his peculiar offspring, nor inferior in beauty, novelty, and wildness of painting, to that which the magic of his pencil has diffused over every other part of his visionary world.

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. v. pp. 204, 205, 208, 209. Merry Wives of Windsor, act v. sc. 5.

Thus, in imparting to us an idea of the diminutive size of his Fairies, with what picturesque minutiae has he marked his sketch ! Speaking of the altercation between Oberon and Titania, he mentions, as one of its results, that

————— “ all their elves, for fear,
Creep into acorn cups, and hide them there :” *

and he delineates Ariel as sleeping in *a cowslip's bell*, as living merrily “ under the blossom that hangs on the bough,” and flying after summer mounted on the *back of the bat*. †

In accordance with this smallness of stature, are all their accompaniments and employments contrived, with the most admirable proportion and the most vivid imagination. Their dress tinted “ green and white ‡,” is constructed of the “ wings of rear-mice §,” and their wrappers of the “ snake's enamelled skin || ;” the *pensioners* of their *queen* are “ the cowslips tall ¶ ;” her lacquies, *Peas-blossom*, *Cobweb*, *Moth*, and *Mustard-seed* ¹; her lamps the green lustre of the glow-worm ²; and her equipage, one of the most exquisite pictures of frolic imagination, is thus minutely drawn :

“ O, then, I see, queen Mab hath been with you.

————— She comes
In shape no bigger than an agate stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies : —
Her waggon-spokes made of long spinner's legs ;
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers ;
The traces, of the smallest spider's web ;
The collars, of the moonshine's watry beams :
Her whip, of cricket's bone ; the lash, of film :

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 346. *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act ii. sc. 1.

† Ibid. vol. iv. pp. 154, 155. *Tempest*, act v. sc. 1.

‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 202. *Merry Wives of Windsor*, act v. sc. 5.

§ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 381. *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act ii. sc. 3.

|| Ibid. vol. iv. p. 379. Act ii. sc. 2. ¶ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 344. Act ii. sc. 1.

¹ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 402. Act iii. sc. 1. ² Ibid. vol. iv. p. 403. Act iii. sc. 1.

Her waggoner, a small grey-coated gnat,
 Not half so big as a round little worm
 Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid :
 Her chariot is an empty hazel nut,
 Maid by the joiner squirrel, or old grub,
 Time out of mind the fairies' coach-makers." *

Of the various occupations and amusements assigned to the Fairies, the most constant which tradition has preserved, has been that of dancing at midnight, hand in hand in a circle, a diversion common to every system of this mythology, but which Shakspeare perhaps first described with graphic precision. The scenery selected for this sport, in which —

“ To dance their ringlets to the whistling wind,”

was, we are told by Titania,

—— “ on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
 By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
 Or on the beached margent of the sea,” †

and the *light of the moon* was a necessary adjunct to their festivity, —

“ Ye elves —— —— you demy puppets, that
 By moon-shine do the green-sour ringlets make
 Whereof the ewe not bites.” ‡

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xx. pp. 54—56. *Romeo and Juliet*, act i. sc. 4.

† Ibid. vol. iv. pp. 356, 357. *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act ii. sc. 2.

‡ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 151. *Tempest*, act v. sc. 1. — Thus Milton, in conformity with these passages, describes his fairy night-scene : —

—— ——— “ Faery elves,
 Whose midnight revels, by a forest side,
 Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
 Or dreams he sees, while over-head the moon
 Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
 Wheels her pale course; they, on their mirth and dance
 Intent, with jocund musick charm his ear.”

Todd's Milton, 2d edit. vol. ii. pp. 368, 369.

The music here alluded to is beautifully described, as an accompaniment of the Scottish Fairies, in Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland : — “ Notwithstanding the

These *ringlets*, the consequence of the fairy footing, our author has particularly noticed in the following lines, adding some striking imagery on the use to which flowers were applied by this sprightly race : —

—— “ Nightly, meadow-fairies, look, you sing,
Like to the Garter’s compass, in a ring :
The expressure that it bears, green let it be,
More fertile-fresh than all the field to see ;
And, Hony soit qui mal y pense, write
In emerald tufts, flowers purple, blue, and white ;
Like sapphire, pearl, and rich embroidery,
Buckled below fair knight-hoods bending knee :
Fairies use flowers for their charactery.” *

To preserve the freshness and verdure of these ringlets by supplying them with moisture, was one of the occupations of Titania’s train : thus a fairy in her service is represented as telling Puck —

“ I do wander every where,
Swifter than the moones sphere ;
*And I serve the fairy queen
To dew her orbs upon the green.*” †

The general amusements of the tribe, independent of their moonlight dance, are very impressively and characteristically enumerated in the subsequent lines : —

“ Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves ;
And ye, that on the sands with printless foot

progressive increase of knowledge, and proportional decay of superstition in the Highlands, these genii are still supposed by many of the people to exist in the woods and sequestered valleys of the mountains, where they frequently appear to the lonely traveller, clothed in green, with dishevelled hair floating over their shoulders, and with faces more blooming than the vermil blush of a summer morning. At night in particular, when fancy assimilates to its own preconceived ideas, every appearance, and every sound, the wandering enthusiast is frequently entertained by their musick, more melodious than he ever before heard.” Vol. xii. p. 462. note.

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. v. pp. 206, 207. Merry Wives of Windsor, act v. sc. 5.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 343. Midsummer-Night’s Dream, act ii. sc. 1.

Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him,
When he comes back; — and you, whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms; that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew." *

But the most astonishing display of the sportive and illimitable fancy of our poet on this subject, will be found in the ministration and offices ascribed to those Fairies who are employed about the person, or executing the mandates, of their Queen. It appears to have been the business of one of her retinue to attend to the decoration of her majesty's *pensioners, the cowslips tall*;

" In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours:
*I must go seek some dew-drops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.*" †

Another duty, not less important, was to lull their mistress asleep on the bosom of a violet or a musk-rose: —

" I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
Where ox-lips and the nodding violet grows;
Quite over-canopied with lush woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine:
There sleeps Titania, some time of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight." ‡

And again, with still greater wildness of imagination, but with the utmost propriety and adaptation of imagery, are they drawn in the performance of similar functions: —

" *Titania.* Come, now a roundel and a fairy song;
Then, for the third part of a minute, hence;
Some, to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds;
Some, war with rear-mice for their leathern wings,
To make my small elves coats; and some keep back

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. pp. 150, 151. Tempest, act v. sc. 1.

† Ibid. vol. iv. pp. 344, 345. Midsummer-Night's Dream, act ii. sc. 1.

‡ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 379. Act ii. sc. 2.

The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots, and wonders
 At our quaint spirits: *Sing me now asleep:*
 Then to your offices, and let me rest."

The song is equally in character, as it forbids, in admirable adherence to poetical truth and consistency, the approach of every insect or reptile, that might be deemed likely to annoy the repose of such a delicate and diminutive being, while Philomel is invoked to add her delicious chaunt to the soothing melody of fairy voices:—

" 1 *Fai.* You spotted snakes, with double tongue,
 Thorny hedge-hogs, be not seen;
 Newts, and blindworms, do no wrong;
 Come not near our fairy queen:

Chorus.

Philomel, with melody,
 Sing in our sweet lullaby;
 Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby:
 Never harm, nor spell nor charm,
 Come our lovely lady nigh;
 So, good night, with lullaby.

2 *Fai.* Weaving spiders, come not here;
 Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence:
 Beetles black, approach not near;
 Worm, nor snail, do no offence.

Chorus.

Philomel, with melody, &c.

1 *Fai.* Hence, away; now all is well:
 One, aloof, stand sentinel.

[*Exeunt Fairies. Titania sleeps.*" *]

This scene, beautiful and appropriate as it is, is yet surpassed, in originality and playfulness of fancy, by the passage in which Titania gives directions to her attendants for their conduct to Bottom, to whom she had previously offered their assistance, promising that they should fetch him "jewels from the deep:"—

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. pp. 380—383. *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act ii. sc. 3.

“ Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
 Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes;
 Feed him with apricocks, and dewberries,
 With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
 The honey-bags steal from the humble bees,
 And, for night tapers, crop their waxen thighs,
 And light them at the fiery glow-worms eyes,
 To have my love to bed, and to arise;
 And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
 To fan the moon-beams from his sleeping eyes;
 Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.” *

The working of Oberon's enchantment on Titania, who “ straight-way lov'd an ass,” and led him to “ her close and consecrated bower,” and the interview between Bottom, her fairy majesty, and her train, though connected with so many supernatural imaginings, have been transferred to the canvas by Fuseli with a felicity which has embodied the very thoughts of Shakspeare, and which may on this subject be said to have placed the genius of the painter almost on a level with that of the poet, so wonderfully has he fixed the illusive creations of his great original.

To this detail of fairy occupation, must be added another feature, on which Shakspeare has particularly dwelt, namely, the attention of the tribe to cleanliness: thus Puck, on entering the palace of Theseus, exclaims, —

“ ————— Not a mouse
 Shall disturb this hallow'd house:
*I am sent, with broom, before,
 To sweep the dust behind the door :” †*

and similar care and neatness are enjoined the elves who haunt the towers of Windsor :—

“ ——— About, about;
 Search Windsor castle, elves, within and out :

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. pp. 402, 403. Midsummer-Night's Dream, act iii. sc. 1.

† Ibid. p. 493. Act v, sc. 2.

Strew good luck, oupes, on every sacred room ;—
The several chairs of order look you scour
With juice of balm, and every precious flower. *

No one could aspire to the favour and protection of the Fairies who was slovenly or personally impure ; punishment, indeed, awaited all who thus offended ; even the majesty of Mab herself condescended

“ To bake the elf-locks in foul sluttish hair ;” †

and *Cricket*, the fairy, being sent on a mission to the chimnies of Windsor, receives the following injunction : —

“ Where fires thou find'st unraked, and hearths unswept,
 There pinch the maids as blue as bilberry :
 Our radiant queen hates sluts, and sluttery.” ‡

In order to complete the picture of fairy superstition, as given us by Shakspeare, it remains to consider his description of *Puck* or *Robin Good-fellow*, the confidential servant of Oberon, an elf or incubus of a mixed and very peculiar character. This quaint, frolicsome, and often mischievous sprite, seems to have been compounded of the qualities ascribed by Gervase of Tilbury to his *Goblin Grant*, and to his *Portuni*, two species of dæmons whom he describes, both in name and character, as denizens of England ; of the benevolent propensities attributed by Agricola to the *Guteli*, *Cobali*, or Brownies of Germany, and of additional features and powers, the gift and creation of our bard.

A large portion of these descriptions of the German writers, and of his countryman Gervase, Shakspeare would find in Reginald Scot, and from their union with the product of his own fancy, has arisen the *Puck* of the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, a curious amalgamation of the *fairy*, the *brownie*, and the *hob-goblin*, whom Burton calls “ a bigger

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. v. pp. 205, 206. Merry Wives of Windsor, act v. sc. 5.

† Ibid. vol. xx. p. 59. Romeo and Juliet, act i. sc. 4.

‡ Ibid. vol v. p. 203. Merry Wives of Windsor, act v. sc. 5.

kind of fairy." * Scot's vocabulary of the fairy tribe is singularly copious, including not less than nine or ten appellations which have been bestowed, with more or less propriety, on this *Proteus* of the Gothic elves. — "In our childhood," he observes, "our mother's maids have so terrified us with — *bull-beggars*, spirits, urchens, elves, hags, fairies, satyrs, pans, faunes, sylens, *kit with the cansticke*, dwarfes, imps, nymphes, changlings, *incubus*, *Robin Good-fellowe*, the spoone, the mare, the *man in the oke*, the *hell waine*, the *fier drake*, the *puckle* Tom thombe, *hob goblin*, *Tom tumbler*, boneless, and such other bugs, that we are afraid of our owne shadowes." †

It is remarkable, however, that the Puck of Shakspeare is introduced by a term not found in this catalogue:—"Farewell, thou *Lob of Spirits*," says the fairy to him in their first interview, — a title which, as we shall perceive hereafter, could not be meant to imply, as Dr. Johnson supposed, either inactivity of body or dulness of mind, for Puck was occasionally swifter than the wind, and notorious, as the immediately subsequent passage informs us, for his shrewdness and ingenuity:—

"Either I mistake your shape and making quite,"

says the fairy, after bestowing the above title,

* Burton's account of the Fairies, first published in 1617, is given with his usual erudition, and the part alluded to in the text, proceeds thus:—"A bigger kind there is of them (fairies), called with us *Hobgoblins*, and *Robin Good fellows*, that would in those superstitious times, grind corn for a mess of milk, cut wood, or do any manner of drudgery work. They would mend old Irons in those Æolian Isles of Lypara, in former ages, and have been often seen and heard. *Tholosanus* calls them *Trullos* and *Getulos*, and saith, that in his dayes they were common in many places of France. *Dithmarus Bleskenius*, in his description of Island, reports for a certainty, that almost in every family they have yet some such familiar spirits; and *Felix Malleolus* in his book de crudel. dæmon., affirms as much, that these *Trolli* or *Telchines*, are very common in Norway, and seen to do drudgery work, to draw water, saith *Wierus*, lib. i. cap. 32, dress meat or any such thing."

Anatomy of Melancholy, fol. 7th edit., 1676, p. 29, col. 1.

† The Discoverie of Witchcraft, 4to., 1584, pp. 152, 153.

“ Or else you are that *shrewd* and knavish sprite,
Call’d Robin Good-fellow;”

and then proceeds to characterise him by the peculiarity of his functions : —

“ Are you not he,
That fright the maidens of the villagery;
Skim milk; and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm;
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
Are you not he?” *

an interrogatory to which he replies in the following terms : —

“ Thou speak’st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile,
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly-foal:
And sometime lurk I in a gossip’s bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab;
And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob,
And on her wither’d dew-lap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
And *taylor* cries, and falls into a cough;
And then the whole quire hold their hips, and loffe;
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.” †

The greater part of these frolics, indeed all but the last, may be traced in *Gervase of Tilbury*, *Agricola*, and *Scot*: the “misleading night-wanderers,” for instance, “laughing at their harm,” and “neighing in likeness of a filly foal,” feats which *Puck* afterwards thus again enumerates, —

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. iv. pp. 347, 348. *Midsummer-Night’s Dream*, act ii. sc. 1.

† Ibid. vol. iv. pp. 350—352.

" I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,
 Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier;
Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;
 And *neigh*, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
 Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn," * —

are expressly attributed by Gervase to the goblins whom he has termed *Grant* and *Portuni*: — "*Est in Anglia quoddam dæmonum genus, quod suo idiomate Grant nominant adinstar pulli equini anniculi, tibiis erectum oculis scintillantibus,*" &c. — Cum — inter ambiguas noctis tenebras *Angli* solitarii quandoque equitant, *Portunus* nonnunquam invisus equitanti sese copulat, et cum diutius comitatur euntem, tandem loris arreptis equum in latum ad manum ducit, in quo dum infixos volutatur, *portunus exiens cachinnum facit, et sic hujusmodi ludibrio humanam simplicitatem deridet.*" †

The domestic offices and drudgery which Puck delighted to perform for his favourites, are mentioned by *Lavaterus* as belonging to his *Fairies of the Earth*; by *Agricola* to his *Cobali* and *Guteli*, and by *Scot* to his *Incubi* and *Virunculi*. Thus the first of these writers observes, in the words of the English translation of 1572, that "men imagine there be certayne elves or fairies of the earth, and tell many straunge and marvellous tales of them, which they have heard of their grandmothers and mothers, howe they *have appeared unto those of the house, have done service, have rocked the cradell,* and (which is a signe of good luck) *do continually tary in the house* †; and he subsequently gives us from *Agricola* the following passage: — "There be some (demons) very mild and gentle, whome some of the *Germans* call *Cobali*, as the *Grecians* do, because they be as it were apes and counterfeiterers of men: for they leaping, and skipping for joy do laughe, and sæme as though they did many things, when in very dæde they doo nothing. — Some other call them *Elves*; — they are

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 398.

† Vide De Otis Imperialibus, dec. iii. cap. 61, 62.

‡ Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by nyght, 4to. 1572, p. 49.

not much unlike unto those whom the *Germans* call *Guteli*, bycause they sæme to beare good affection towards men, for *they keepe horses*, and do *other necessary businesse*.” *

The resemblance which these descriptions bear both to the *Brownie* of the Scotch and the *Puck* of Shakspeare are very evident: but the combination and similitude are rendered still more apparent in the words of *Scot*; the “*Virunculi terrei*,” says he, “are such as was *Robin good fellowe*, that would supplie the office of servants, speciallie of maids; as to make a fier in the morning, sweepe the house, grind mustard and malt, drawe water, &c. †;” and speaking of the *Incubus*, he adds: — “In deede your grandams maides were wont to set a boll of milke before him and his cousine *Robin good-fellow*, for grinding of malt or mustard, and sweeping the house at midnight: and you have also heard that *he would chafe exceedingly, if the maid or good-wife of the house, having compassion on his nakednesse, laid anie clothes for him, beesides his messe of white bread and milke, which was his standing fee. For in that case he saith; What have we here? Hemten, hamten, here will I never more tread nor stampen.*” ‡

The lines in *italics* point out one of the most characteristic features of the *Brownie*, while the preceding parts, and the last word of the quotation, are in unison, both with the passages just transcribed from our poet, and with that expression of *Puck*, where, describing to Oberon the terror and dispersion of the rustic comedians, he says —

“ And, at *our stamp*, here o’er and o’er one falls.” §

It may be also remarked, that the idea of fixing “an ass’s nowl” on Bottom’s head, is most probably taken from *Scot*, who gives us a very curious receipt for this singular metamorphosis. ||

* Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by nyght, 4to. 1752, p. 75.

† Discoverie of Witchcraft, 4to. 1584, p. 521.

‡ Discoverie, p. 85.

§ Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 409.

|| “Cut off the head of a horsse or an asse (before they be dead), otherwise the vertue or strength thereof will be the lesse effectually, and make an earthen vessell of fit capacitie

So far, then, the *Puck* of Shakspeare is in conformity with the tales of tradition, and of preceding writers; he is the "Goblin fear'd in field and town *," who loves all things best "that befall preposterously †," and who, even when the poet wrote, had not ceased to excite apprehension; for Scot hath told us, nine years before the era of the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, that *Robin Good-fellow* ceaseth now to be *much feared*. ‡

But to these traits of customary character, Shakspeare has added some which greatly modify the picture, and which have united to the "drudging goblin," and to the demon of mischievous frolic, duties and functions of a very different cast. He is the messenger §, and trusty servant || of the fairy king, by whom, in these capacities, he is called gentle ¶ and good **, and he combines with all his hereditary attributes, the speed, the legerity, and the intellectual skill of the highest order of the fairy world. Accordingly when Oberon says —

" Fetch me this herb : and be thou here again,
Ere the leviathan can swim a league ;"

to containe the same, and let it be filled with the oile and fat thereof; cover it close, and dawbe it over with lome : let it boile over a soft fier three daies continuallie, that the flesh boiled may run into oile, so as the bare bones may be seene : beate the haire into powder, and mingle the same with the oile; and annoint the heads of the standers by, and they shall seeme to have horsse or asses heads." — *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 1584, p. 315.

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 434. *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act iii. sc. 2.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 416.

‡ *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 1584. — Epistle to the Readers, in which he afterwards speaks of "the want of Robin Goodfellowe and the fairies, which were wont to main-teine chat, and the common peoples talke in this behalfe."

§ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 406. *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act iii. sc. 2.

" Ob. Here comes my messenger."

|| Ibid. vol. iv. p. 380. Act ii. sc. 3.

" Puck. Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so."

¶ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 369. Act ii. sc. 2.

" Ob. My gentle Puck, come hither :"

** Ibid. vol. iv. p. 445. Act iv. sc. 1.

" Ob. Welcome, good Robin."

he replies,

“ I’ll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes;” *

and again, on receiving commission from the same quarter : —

“ *Obe.* About the wood go swifter than the wind :

Puck. I go, I go; look, how I go;

Swifter than arrow from the Tartar’s bow.” †

Upon the whole we may be allowed, from the preceding dissertation, to consider the following series of circumstances as entitled to the appellation of facts: namely, that the *patria* of our popular system of fairy mythology, was the *Scandinavian Peninsula*; that, on its admission into this country, it gradually underwent various modifications through the *influence of Christianity*, the *introduction of classical associations*, and the *prevalence of feudal manners*; but that, ultimately, two systems became established; one in Scotland, founded on the wild and more terrific parts of the Gothic mythology, and the other in England, built, indeed, on the same system, but from a selection of its milder features, and converted by the genius of Shakspeare into one of the most lovely creations of a sportive imagination. Such, in fact, has been the success of our bard in expanding and colouring the germs of Gothic fairyism; in assigning to its tiny agents, new attributes and powers; and in clothing their ministration with the most light and exquisite imagery, that his portraits, in all their essential parts, have descended to us as indissolubly connected with, and indeed nearly, if not altogether, forming, our ideas of the fairy tribe.

The canvas, it is true, which he stretched, has been since expanded, and new groupes have been introduced; but the outline and the mode of colouring which he employed, have been invariably followed. It

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 374. *Midsummer-Night’s Dream*, act ii. sc. 2.

† *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 415. Act iii. sc. 2.

is, in short, to his picture of the fairy world, that we are indebted for the *Nymphidia* of Drayton*; the *Robin Goodfellow* of Jonson†; the miniatures of Fletcher and Browne‡; the full-length portraits of Herrick§; the sly allusions of Corbet||, and the spirited and picturesque sketches of Milton.¶

To Shakspeare, therefore, as the remodeller, and almost the inventor of our fairy system, may, with the utmost propriety, be addressed the elegant compliment which Browne has paid to Occleve, certainly inappropriate as applied to that rugged imitator of Chaucer, but admirably adapted to the peculiar powers of our bard, and delightfully expressive of what we may conceive would be the gratitude, were such testimony possible, of these children of his playful fancy:—

“ Many times he hath been seene
With the faeries on the greene,
And to them his pipe did sound
As they danced in a round;
Mickle solace would they make him,
And at midnight often wake him;

* This beautiful and highly fanciful poem could not certainly have been written before 1605; for the *Don Quixote* of Cervantes, which was first published in Spain during the above year, is expressly mentioned in one of the stanzas; and Mr. Malone thinks that the earliest edition of the *Nymphidia* was printed in 1619.—Vide Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. iv. p. 350.

† Peck attributes this song to Ben Jonson; and Percy observes, that it seems to have been originally intended for some masque.—*Reliques*, vol. iii. p. 203. ed. 1594.

‡ See Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, and Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*.

§ Herrick, as I have observed in a former work, seems more particularly to have delighted in drawing the manners and costume of the fairy world.—He has devoted several of his most elaborate poems to these sportive creations of fancy. Under the titles of *The Fairy Temple*, *Oberon's Palace*, *The Fairy Queen*, and *Oberon's Feast*, a variety of curious and minute imagery is appositely introduced. *Literary Hours*, 3d edit. vol. iii. p. 85.—To these may be added another elegantly descriptive piece, entitled, *King Oberon's Apparel*, written by Sir John Mennis, and published in *The Musarum Deliciæ*, or *The Muses Recreation*, 1656.

|| In his political ballad entitled *The Fairies Farewell*.

¶ Vide *L'Allegro*, and the occasional sketches in *Paradise Lost* and *Comus*.

And convey him from his roome
 To a field of yellow broome,
 Or into the meadowes where
 Mints perfume the gentle aire,
 And where Flora spreads her treasure,
 There they would beginn their measure.
 If it chanc'd night's sable shrowds
 Muffled Cynthia up in clouds,
 Safely home they then would see him,
 And from brakes and quagmires free him.
 There are few such swaines as he
 Now a days for harmonie." *

* See Shepherd's Pipe, Eglogue I. Chalmers's English Poets, vol. vi. p. 315. col. 2.

CHAPTER X.

OBSERVATIONS ON *ROMEO AND JULIET*; ON *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*; ON *THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA*; ON *KING RICHARD THE THIRD*; ON *KING RICHARD THE SECOND*; ON *KING HENRY THE FOURTH, PARTS I. & II.*; ON *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*, AND ON *HAMLET* — DISSERTATION ON THE AGENCY OF SPIRITS AND APPARITIONS, AND ON THE GHOST IN *HAMLET*.

IN endeavouring to ascertain the chronological series of our author's plays, we must ever hold in mind, that, in general, nothing more than *a choice of probabilities* is before us, and that, whilst weighing their preponderancy, the slightest additional circumstance, so equally are they sometimes balanced, may turn the scale. It appears to us, that an occurrence of this kind will be found to point out, more accurately than hitherto, the precise period to which the *first* sketch of the following tragedy may be ascribed.

7. *ROMEO AND JULIET*: 1593. The passage in this play on which the commentators have chiefly relied for the establishment of their respective dates, runs thus: —

“ Nurse. Even or odd, of all days in the year,
Come Lammas-eve at night, shall she (Juliet) be *fourteen*.
That shall she, marry; I remember it well.
’Tis since *the earthquake* now *eleven years*;
And she was *wean’d*, — I never shall forget it, —
For then she could *stand alone*; nay, by the rood,
She could have *run* and *waddled* all about.” *

Building on Shakspeare’s usual custom of alluding to the events of his own time, and transferring them to the scene and period of the piece on which he happened to be engaged, Mr. Tyrwhitt with much probability conjectured, that the poet, in these lines, had in

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xx, pp. 37—39. Act i. sc. 3.

view the earthquake which, according to Stowe* and Gabriel Harvey, took place in England on the 6th of April, 1580; but then, relying, unfortunately too much, on the computation of the good nurse, he hastily concludes, that *Romeo and Juliet*, or a part of it at least, was written in 1591. †

Mr. Malone, after admitting the inference of Mr. Tyrwhitt, adds another conjecture, that the foundation of this play might be laid in 1591, and finished at a subsequent period ‡, which period he has assigned in his chronology to the year 1595. §

Lastly, Mr. Chalmers, principally because Shakspeare appears to have borrowed some imagery in the fifth act, from *Daniel's Complaint of Rosamond*, which was entered at Stationers' Hall on the 4th of February, 1592, has ascribed the first sketch of *Romeo and Juliet* to the spring-time of the same year. ||

Now, adopting the opinion of Mr. Tyrwhitt as to Shakspeare's reference to the earthquake of 1580, a little attention to the lines which the poet has put into the mouth of his garrulous nurse, will convince us that these gentlemen are alike mistaken in their chronological calculations.

The nurse in the first place tells us, that Juliet was within little more than a fortnight of being fourteen years old, an assertion in which she could not be incorrect, as it is corroborated by Lady Capulet, who thinks her daughter, in consequence of this age, fit for marriage. In the next place she informs us that Juliet was weaned on the day of the earthquake, and as she could then stand and run alone, we must conceive her to have been at this period at least a twelvemonth old; and thirdly, and immediately afterwards we are told, with a contradiction which assigns to Juliet but the age of twelve, —

“ 'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years.”

* See Stowe's Chronicle, and Gabriel Harvey's Letter in the Preface to Spenser's Works, edit. 1679.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xx. p. 38. note 2.

‡ Ibid. vol. ii. p. 272.

§ Ibid. vol. ii. p. 268.

|| Supplemental Apology, p. 286.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that this miscalculation of *eleven* for *thirteen* years, was intended as a characteristic feature of the superannuated nurse, and that, assuming the era of 1580 as the epoch meant to be conveyed in the allusion to the earthquake at Verona, the composition of *Romeo and Juliet* must be allotted, not to the years 1591, 1592, or 1595, but to the year 1593.

It appears somewhat singular, indeed, that Mr. Malone, contrary to his usual custom, should have given a place in his Chronology, not to the *first sketch* of this play, but to a *supposed completion* of it in 1595; more especially when we find, from his own words*, that this, like several other dramas of our bard, was gradually and successively improved, and that, though first printed in 1597, it was not filled up and completed as we now have it, until 1599, when a second edition was published.

Some surprise also must be excited by the reasons which induced Mr. Chalmers to date the first sketch of this tragedy in the spring of 1592. Of these the first, he remarks, "is plainly an allusion to the Faerie Queene, the three first books of which were published in 1590; and which was continually present in our poet's mind; Mercutio, in his airy and satiric speech, cries out, —

" O, then, I see Queen Mab hath been with you.
She is the fairies midwife; and she comes,
In shape no bigger than aggat stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman: "†

forgetting, that between the *popular fairies*, the *tiny elves*, of Shakspeare, and the *allegorical fairies* of Spenser, there is not the smallest similarity, not even a point in contact. The second, drawn from the imitation of Daniel, has been noticed above, and might with as much, if not more probability be assigned for its date in 1593 as in the year preceding.

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 269.

† Supplemental Apology, p. 284.

There is much reason to suppose, from a late communication by Mr. Haslewood, that this play was not altogether founded on Arthur Broke's "Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet," but partly on a *theatrical exhibition* of the same story which had taken place anterior to 1562; for in a copy of Broke's poem of this date in the Collection of the Rev. H. White, of the Close, Lichfield, occurs an address "To the Reader," not found in Mr. Capell's impression of 1562, and omitted in the edition of 1587, which closes with the following curious piece of information:—"Though I saw," observes Broke, speaking in reference to his story, "*the same argument lately set foorth on the stage with more commendation, then I can looke for: (being there much better set forth then I have or can dooe)* yet the same matter penned as it is, may serve to *lyke good effect*, if the readers do brynge with them *lyke good myndes*, to consider it, which hath the more encouraged me to publishe it, suche as it is." *

Here we find three important circumstances announced: that a play on this subject had, previous to 1562, been *set forth with no little preparation*; that it contained the *same argument and matter* with the Tragical History, and that it had been *well received* and productive of a *good effect*! Thirty years, consequently, before Shakspeare's tragedy appeared, had the stage been familiar with this pathetic tale. †

* British Bibliographer, vol. ii. p. 115.—The title, which is wanting in Mr. Capell's copy of 1562, is thus given by Mr. Hazlewood:—

" The Tragicall His-
torye of Romeus and Juliet, writ-
ten first in Italian by Bandell,
and nowe in Englishe by
Ar. Br.
In ædibus Richardi Tottelli.
Cum Priuilegio.
(Col.) Imprinted at London in
Flete strete within Temble barre, at
the signe of the hand and starre, by
Richard Tottill the xix day of
November. An. do. 1562."

† "Steevens," remarks Mr. Haslewood, "in a note prefixed to the play, rather prophetically observes, 'we are not yet at the end of our discoveries relative to the originals

The play, therefore, as well as the metrical history of Broke, must have departed, in its catastrophe, from the story of Luigi da Porta in which Juliet awakens from her trance before the death of Romeo. It is probable also that the play misled the English translator, and both Shakspeare; for it is remarkable that Broke, who pretends to translate from Bandello, has deserted his supposed original, which, with regard to the denouement, as in every thing else, precisely copies Da Porta, who, it would seem, had the honour of improving on a preceding writer by the introduction of this novel and affecting incident.

“The origin of Shakspeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*,” observes Mr. Dunlop, “has generally been referred to the *Giuletta* of Luigi da Porta.

of our author’s dramattick pieces:’ true: a play founded on the story of Romeo and Juliet, appearing on the stage ‘with commendation,’ anterior to the time of Shakspeare, is a new discovery for the commentators.”

To the notices afforded us by the Commentators on Shakspeare, of the popularity of the story of Romeo and Juliet, may be added the following, collected by the industry of Mr. Hazlewood. The first is from “The Pleasant fable of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, by T. Peend, Gent. With a morall in English Verse. Anno Domini 1565, Mense Decembris. (Col.) Imprinted at London in Flete streat beneath the Conduyt, at the sygne of S. John Euangelyste, by Thomas Colwell. Oct. 24 leaves.”

“And Juliet, Romeus yonge,
for bewty did imbrace,
Yet dyd hys manhode well agree,
unto hys worthy grace:”

On which lines occurs the following note, at the end of the poem: — “Juliet. A noble mayden of the cytye Verona in Italye, whyche loued Romeus, eldest sonne of the Lorde Montesche, and beinge pryuely maryed together: he at last poysoned hymselfe for loue of her. She for sorowe of hys deathe, slewe her selfe in the same tombe, with hys dagger.”

— Brit. Bibliographer, vol. ii. pp. 344. 347. 349.

The second instance is from a work entitled “*Philotimus. The Warre betwixt Nature and Fortune.* Compiled by Brian Melbancke Student in Graies Inne. *Palladi virtutis fanula.* Imprinted at London by Roger Warde, dwelling neere unto Holborne Conduit at the signe of the Talbot, 1583.” 4to. pp. 226.

“Nowe Priams sone give place, thy Helen’s hew is stainde. O Troylus, weepe no more, faire Cressed thyne is lothlye fowle. Nor Hercules thou haste cause to vaunt for thy swete Omphale: nor *Romeo thou hast cause to weepe for Juliets losse,*” &c. — Brit. Bibliographer, vol. ii. pp. 438. 444.

Of this tale Mr. Douce has attempted to trace the origin as far back as the Greek romance by Xenophon Ephesius; but when it is considered that this work was not published in the lifetime of Luigi da Porta, I do not think the resemblance so strong as to induce us to believe that it was seen by that novelist. His *Giuletta* is evidently borrowed from the thirty-second novel of Massucio, which must unquestionably be regarded as the ultimate origin of the celebrated drama of Shakspeare, though it has escaped, as far as I know, the notice of his numerous commentators. In the story of Massucio, a young gentleman, who resided in Sienna, is privately married by a friar to a lady of the same place, of whom he was deeply enamoured. Mariotto, the husband, is forced to fly from his country, on account of having killed one of his fellow-citizens in a squabble in the streets. An interview takes place between him and his wife before the separation. After the departure of Mariotto, Giannozza, the bride, is pressed by her friends to marry: she discloses her perplexing situation to the friar, by whom the nuptial ceremony had been performed. He gives her a soporific powder, which she drinks dissolved in water; and the effect of this narcotic is so strong that she is believed to be dead by her friends, and interred according to custom. The accounts of her death reach her husband in Alexandria, whither he had fled, before the arrival of a special messenger, who had been dispatched by the friar to acquaint him with the real posture of affairs. Mariotto forthwith returns in despair to his own country, and proceeds to lament over the tomb of his bride. Before this time she had recovered from her lethargy, and had set out for Alexandria in quest of her husband, who meanwhile is apprehended and executed for the murder he had formerly committed. Giannozza, finding he was not in Egypt, returns to Sienna, and, learning his unhappy fate, retires to a convent, where she soon after dies. The catastrophe here is different from the novel of Luigi da Porta and the drama of Shakspeare, but there is a perfect correspondence in the preliminary incidents. The tale of Massucio was written about 1470, which was long prior to the age of Luigi da Porta, who died in 1531, or of Cardinal Bembo,

to whom some have attributed the greater part of the composition." *

With the exception of the incident which distinguishes the close of the story as related by Luigi da Porta, Shakspeare has worked up the materials which preceded his drama with the most astonishing effect ; and by the beauty of his sentiments, the justness of his delineation, and the felicity of his language, he has drawn the most glowing, pathetic, and interesting picture of disastrous love which the world has yet contemplated.

We perceive the highest tone of enthusiasm, combined with the utmost purity, fidelity, and tenderness, pervading every stage of the intercourse between *Romeo and Juliet* : and, elevated as they are, to an almost *perfect ideal* representation of the influence of love, so much of actual nature is interwoven with every expression of their feelings, that our sympathy irresistibly augments with the progress of the fable, and becomes at length almost overwhelming. Indeed, such is the force of the appeal which the poet makes to the heart in this bewitching drama, that, were it not relieved by the occasional intervention of lighter emotions, the effect would be truly painful ; but, with his wonted fertility of resource, our author has effected this purpose in a manner, which, while it heightens by the power of contrast, at the same time diversifies the picture, and exhilarates the mind. Every hue of many-coloured life, the effervescence of hope, and the hushed repose of disappointment, the bloom of youth, and the withered aspect of age, the intoxication of rapture, and the bitterness of grief, the scintillations of wit, and the speechless agonies of despair, tears and smiles, groans and laughter, are so blended in the texture of this piece, as to produce the necessary relief, without disturbing the union and harmony of the whole, or impairing, in the smallest degree, the gradually augmenting interest which accompanies the hapless lovers to their tomb.

* The History of Fiction, vol. ii. pp. 339—341. 1st edit.

What, for instance, can be more opposed to each other, and to the youthful victims of the drama, than the characters of *Mercutio*, *Friar Lawrence*, and the *Nurse*; yet the brilliancy and gaiety of the first, the philosophic dignity of the second, and the humorous garrulity of the third, while they afford a welcome repose to our feelings, are essential to the developement of the plot, and to the full display of those scenes of terror and distress which alternately freeze and melt the heart, to the last syllable of this sweet and mournful tale.

Numerous as have been its relators, who has told it like our matchless bard? "It was reserved for Shakspeare," remarks Schlegel, in a tone of the finest enthusiasm, "to unite purity of heart and the glow of imagination, sweetness and dignity of manners and passionate violence, in one ideal picture. By the manner in which he has handled it, it has become a glorious song of praise on that inexpressible feeling which ennobles the soul, and gives to it its highest sublimity, and which elevates even the senses themselves into soul, and at the same time is a melancholy elegy on its frailty, from its own nature, and external circumstances; at once the deification and the burial of love. It appears here like a heavenly spark that, descending to the earth, is converted into a flash of lightning, by which mortal creatures are almost in the same moment set on fire and consumed. Whatever is most intoxicating in the odour of a southern spring, languishing in the song of the nightingale, or voluptuous in the first opening of the rose, is breathed into this poem. But even more rapidly than the earliest blossoms of youth and beauty decay, it hurries on from the first timidly-bold declaration of love and modest return, to the most unlimited passion, to an irrevocable union; then, amidst alternating storms of rapture and despair, to the death of the two lovers, who still appear enviable as their love survives them, and as by their death they have obtained a triumph over every separating power. The sweetest and the bitterest, love and hatred, festivity and dark forebodings, tender embraces and sepulchres, the fullness of life and self-annihilation, are all here brought close to each other; and all these contrasts are so blended in the

harmonious and wonderful work, into a unity of impressions, that the echo which the whole leaves behind in the mind, resembles a single but endless sigh." *

8. THE TAMING OF THE SHREW: 1594. Nothing appearing to invalidate the conclusion of Mr. Malone, that this was one of our author's earliest plays, we have adhered to his chronology; for the lines quoted by Mr. Chalmers, in order to establish a posterior date,

" 'Tis death for any one in Mantua
To come to Padua," &c.†

would, if there be any weight in this instance, procure a similar assignment, as to time, for the *Comedy of Errors*, where we find a like prohibition of intercourse:—

——— " If any Syracusan born
Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies;" ‡

yet no one, in consequence of such a passage, has entertained an idea of ascribing this comedy to the year 1598.

The outline of the induction to this drama may be traced, as Mr. Douce observes §, through many intermediate copies, to the *Sleeper Awakened* of the Arabian Nights; but it is most probable, that the immediate source of this prelude, both to the anonymous author of the old *Taming of a Shrew*, and to Shakspeare himself, was the *story-book* said by Warton to have been once in the possession of Collins the poet, a collection of short comic tales, "sett forth by maister Richard Edwards, mayster of her Majesties revels," in the year 1570. ||

* A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature. By Augustus William Schlegel. Translated from the original German, by John Black. 8vo. 2 vols. 1815. vol. i. pp. 187, 188.

† Supplemental Apology, p. 371.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xx. p. 349. Act i. sc. 1.

§ Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 342.

|| Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ix. p. 5.

From whatever source, however, this apologue may have been directly taken, we cannot but feel highly indebted to Shakspeare for its conversion into a lesson of exquisite moral irony, while, at the same time, it unfolds his wonted richness of humour, and minute delineation of character. The whole, indeed, is conducted with such lightness and frolic spirit, with so many happy touches of risible simplicity, yet chastised by so constant an adherence to nature and verisimilitude, as to form one of the most delightful and instructive sketches.

So admirably drawn is the character of Sly, that we regret to find the interlocation of the groupe before whom the piece is supposed to be performed, has been dropped by our author after the close of the first scene of the play. Here we behold the jolly tinker nodding, and, at length, honestly exclaiming, '*Would't were done!*' and, though the integrity of the representation require, that he should finally return to his former state, the transformation, as before, being effected during his sleep, yet we hear no more of this truly comic personage; whereas in the spurious play, he is frequently introduced commenting on the scene, is carried off the stage fast asleep, and, on the termination of the drama, undergoes the necessary metamorphosis.

It would appear, therefore, either that our bard's continuation of the induction has been unaccountably lost, or that he trusted the remainder of Sly's part to the improvisatory ingenuity of the performers; or, what is more likely, that they were instructed to copy a certain portion of what had been written, for this subordinate division of the tinker's character, by the author of the elder play. Some of the observations, indeed, of Sly, as given by the writer of this previous comedy, are incompatible with the fable and *Dramatis Personæ* of Shakspeare's production; and have, consequently, been very injudiciously introduced by Mr. Pope; but there are two passages which, with the exception of but two names, are not only accordant with our poet's prelude, but absolutely necessary to its completion. Shakspeare, as we have seen, represents Sly as nodding at the end of

the first scene; and the parts of the anonymous play to which we allude, are those where the nobleman orders the sleeping tinker to be put into his own apparel again, and where he awakens in this garb, and believes the whole to have been a dream; the only alterations required in this *finale*, being the omission of the Christian appellative *Sim*, and the conversion of *Tapster* into *Hostess*. These few lines were, most probably, those which Shakspeare selected as a necessary accompaniment to his piece, from the old drama supposed to have been written in 1590*; and these lines should be withdrawn from the notes in all the modern editions, and, though distinguished as borrowed property, should be immediately connected with the text.†

As to the play itself, the rapidity and variety of its action, the skilful connection of its double plot, and the strength and vivacity of its principal characters, must for ever ensure its popularity. There is, indeed, a depth and breadth of colouring, in its execution, a boldness and prominence of relief, which may be thought to border upon coarseness; but the result has been an effect equally powerful and interesting, though occasionally, as the subject demanded, somewhat glaring and grotesque.

Petruchio, *Katharina*, and *Grumio*, the most important personages of the play, are consistently supported throughout, and their peculiar features touched and brought forward with singular sharpness and spirit; the wild, fantastic humour of the first, the wayward and insolent demeanor of the second, contrasted with the meek, modest, and retired disposition of her sister, together with the inextinguishable wit and drollery of the third, form a picture, at once rich, varied, and pre-eminently diverting.

* "I suspect," says Mr. Malone, "that the anonymous *Taming of a Shrew* was written about the year 1590, either by George Peele or Robert Greene."—Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ix. p. 196.

† "A very droll print of village society," observes Mr. Felton, "might be taken" from this interlude. "It might represent this worthy tinker, at *Marian Hackets* of Wincot, with *Stephen Sly*, *Old John Naps o' th' Green*, *Peter Turf*, and *Henry Pimpernell*, not as smoking their pipes, (as scarce at that day introduced,) but drinking their ale in *stone-jugs*."—Imperfect Hints towards a New Edition of Shakspeare, part i. p. 21.

9. THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA: 1595. There can be little doubt that the episode of *Felismena*, in the *Diana* of George of Montemayor, was the source whence the principal part of the plot of this play has been taken; for, though the Translation of *Bartholomew Yong*, was not published until 1598, it appears from the translator's "Preface to divers learned Gentlemen," that it had been completed in the year 1582; "it hath lyen by me finished," he says, "Horace's ten and six yeeres more," a declaration which renders it very probable, that the manuscript may have been circulated among his friends, and the more striking parts impressed upon their memory. But we are further informed, in this very preface, that a partial but excellent version of the *Diana*, had preceded his labours: — "Well might I," says Yong, "have excused these paines, if onely *Edward Paston, Esquier*, who heere and there for his own pleasure, as I understand, hath aptly turned out of Spanish into English some leaves that liked him best, had also made an absolute and complete Translation of all the Parts of *Diana*: the which, for his travell in that countrey, and great knowledge in that language, accompanied with other learned and good parts in him, had of all others, that ever I heard translate these Bookes, prooved the rarest and worthiest to be embraced." We also learn from Dr. Farmer, that the *Diana* was translated two or three years before 1598, by one Thomas Wilson; but, he adds, "this work, I am persuaded, was never published *entirely*; perhaps some parts of it were, or the tale might have been translated by others." *

These intimations sufficiently warrant the conclusion, that Shakspeare may have become familiar with this portion of the Spanish romance, anterior to the publication of Yong's version in 1598; indeed so closely does the story of Proteus and Julia correspond with the episode of Montemayor, that Shakspeare's obligations cannot be mistaken. "He has copied the original," as Mr. Dunlop observes,

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 176.

“in some minute particulars, which clearly evince the source from which the drama has been derived. As for example, in the letter which Proteus addresses to Julia, her rejection of it when offered by her waiting-maid, and the device by which she afterwards attempts to procure a perusal. (Act i. sc. 2.) In several passages, indeed, the dramatist has copied the language of the pastoral.” *

This play, though betraying marks of negligence and haste, especially towards its termination, is yet a most pleasing and instructive composition. There is scarcely a page of it, indeed, that is not pregnant with some just and useful maxim, and we stand amazed at the blind and tasteless decisions of Hanmer, Theobald, and Upton, who not only disputed the authenticity of this drama, but condemned it as a very inferior production.

So far are these opinions, however, from having any just foundation, that we may safely assert the peculiar style of Shakspeare to be vividly impressed on all the parts of this drama, whether serious or comic; and as to its aphoristic wealth, it may be truly said, with Dr. Johnson, that “it abounds with γορμα beyond most of his plays, and few have more lines or passages, which, singly considered, are eminently beautiful.” †

But besides this, justice requires of us to remark, that there is a romantic and pathetic cast, both of sentiment and character, throughout the more elevated parts of this production, which has given to them a peculiar charm. The delineation of *Julia* in particular, from the gentleness and modesty of her disposition, the ill requital of her attachment, and the hazardous disguise which she assumes, must be confessed to excite the tenderest emotions of sympathy. This is a character, indeed, which Shakspeare has delighted to embody, and which he has further developed in the lovely and fascinating portraits of *Viola* and *Imogen*, who, like *Julia*, forsaken or despised, are driven to the same expedients, and, deserting their native roof, perform

* History of Fiction, 1st edit. vol. iii. p. 131.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 177.

their adventurous pilgrimages under similar modes of concealment. *

A portion also of this romantic enthusiasm has thrown an interest over the characters of *Sir Eglamour* and *Silvia*, and evanescent as the part of the former is, we see enough of him to regret that he has not been brought more forward on the canvas. He is represented as a gentleman

“ Valiant, wise, remorseful, well accomplished,”

and when *Silvia*, on the eve of her elopement, solicits his assistance, she thus addresses him : —

“ Thyself hast loved ; and I have heard thee say,
No grief did ever come so near thy heart,
As when thy lady and thy true love died,
Upon whose grave thou vow’st pure chastity.” †

Nor are the ludicrous scenes less indicative of the hand of Shakspeare, the part of Launce, which forms the chief source of mirth in this play, being supported throughout with undeviating wit and humour, and with an effect greatly superior to that of the comic dialogue of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and *The Comedy of Errors*.

Nor must we forget to remark, that the versification of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is peculiarly sweet and harmonious, and very happily corresponds with the delicacy, simplicity, and tenderness of feeling which have so powerfully shed their never-failing fascination over many of its serious scenes. How exquisitely, for instance, does the rhythm of the following lines, coalesce with and expand their sentiment and imagery :—

* It is remarkable, that a great poet of the present day has exhibited, in his poetical romances, an equal attachment to this mode of disguise. I will here also add, that the compass of English poetry does not, *in point of interest*, afford any thing more stimulating and attractive than the *Dramas* of Shakspeare, the *Romances* of Scott, and the *Tales* of Byron.

† Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 277. Act iv. sc. 3.

"*Julia*. Counsel, Lucetta; gentle girl, assist me!

————— Tell me some good mean,
How, with my honour, I may undertake
A journey to my loving Proteus.

Luc. Alas! the way is wearisome and long.

Jul. A true-devoted pilgrim is not weary
To measure kingdoms with his feeble steps;
Much less shall she, that hath love's wings to fly,
And when the flight is made to one so dear. —

Luc. Better forbear, till Proteus make return. —

Jul. The current, that with gentle murmur glides,
Thou know'st, being stopp'd, impatiently doth rage;
But, when his fair course is not hindered,
He makes sweet musick with the enamel'd stones,
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage;
And so by many winding nooks he strays,
With willing sport, to the wild ocean.
Then let me go, and hinder not my course:
I'll be as patient as a gentle stream,
And make a pastime of each weary step,
Till the last step have brought me to my love;
And there I'll rest, as, after much turmoil,
A blessed soul doth in Elysium." *

10. KING RICHARD THE THIRD: 1595. It is the conjecture of Mr. Malone, and by which he has been guided in his chronological arrangement, that this play, and *King Richard the Second*, were written, acted, registered, and printed in the year 1597. That they were registered and published during this year, we have indisputable authority †; but that they were written and acted within the same period, is a supposition without any proof, and, to say the least of it, highly improbable.

Mr. Chalmers, struck by this incautious assertion, of two such plays being written, acted, and published in a few months ‡; reflecting that

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 234. Act iii. sc. 7.

† Richard the Second was entered on the Stationers' books, on August 29. 1597; and Richard the Third on October 20. 1597; and both printed the same year.

‡ It must be recollected that Mr. Malone's "Chronological Order of Shakspeare's Plays," is founded, not on the period of their publication, but on that of their composition; it is "an attempt to ascertain the order in which the Plays of Shakspeare were written."

Shakspeare, impressed by the character of Gloucester, in his play of *Henry the Sixth*, might be induced to resume his *national* dramas by continuing the *Historie* of Richard, to which he might be more immediately stimulated by his knowledge that an enterlude entitled the *Tragedie of Richard the Third*, had been exhibited in 1593, or 1594 ; and ingeniously surmising that *Richard the Second* was a subsequent production, because it ushered in a distinct and concatenated series of history, has, under this view of the subject, given precedence to *Richard the Third* in the order of composition, and assigned its origin to the year 1595.

The description of a small volume of Epigrams by John Weever, in Mr. Beloe's *Anecdotes of Literature*, has since confirmed the chronology of Mr. Chalmers, so far as it proves that *one* of Shakspeare's *Richards* had certainly been acted in 1595.

The book in question, in the collection of Mr. Comb, of Henley, and supposed to be a unique, was published in 1599, at which period, according to the date of the print of him prefixed by Cecill, the author was twenty-three years old ; but Weever tells us, in some introductory stanzas, that when he wrote the poems which compose this volume, he was *not* twenty years old ; that he was one

“ That twenty twelve months yet did *never know*,”

consequently, these Epigrams *must have been written in 1595*, though not printed before 1599. They exhibit the following title : “ Epigrammes in the oldest Cut and newest Fashion. A twise seven Houres (in so many Weekes) Studie. No longer (like the Fashion) not unlike to continue. The first seven, John Weever.

Sit voluisse sit valuisse.

At London : printed by V. S. for Thomas Bushell, and are to be sold at his shop, at the great North doore of Paules. 1599. 12mo.”

Of this collection the twenty-second Epigram of the fourth Weeke, which we have formerly had occasion to notice, and which we shall now give at length, is addressed

“ AD GULIELMUM SHAKESPEARE.

Honie-Tongd Shakespeare, when I saw thine issue,
 I swore Apollo got them, and none other,
 Their rosie-tainted features clothed in tissue,
 Some heaven-born goddesse said to be their mother.
 Rose cheeckt Adonis with his amber tresses,
 Faire fire-hot Venus charming him to love her,
 Chaste Lucretia, virgine-like her dresses,
 Proud lust-stung Tarquine seeking still to prove her,
 Romeo, RICHARD, more whose names I know not,
 Their sugred tongues and power attractive beauty,
 Say they are saints, although that Sts they shew not,
 For thousand vowes to them subjective dutie,
 They burn in love thy children Shakspeare let them
 Go wo thy muse more nymphish brood beget them.” *

We have no doubt that by the *Richard* of this epigram the author meant to imply the play of *Richard the Third*, which, according to our arrangement, was the *immediately succeeding tragedy* to *Romeo*, and may be said to have been almost promised by the poet in the two concluding scenes of the *Last Part of King Henry the Sixth*, a promise which, as we believe, was carried into execution after an interval of three years. †

* Anecdotes of Literature and Scarce books, vol. vi. pp. 156. 158, 159.

† The lines which seem to imply the future intentions of the poet, are these: —

“ *Glo.* Clarence, beware: thou keep'st me from the light;
 But I will sort a pitchy day for thee:
 For I will buz abroad such prophecies,
 That Edward shall be fearful of his life;
 And then, to purge his fear, I'll be thy death.
 King Henry, and the prince his son, are gone:
 Clarence, thy turn is next, and then the rest.”

Henry VI. Pt. III. act v. sc. 6.

“ *Glo.* I'll blast his harvest, if your head were laid;
 For yet I am not look'd on in the world.
 This shoulder was ordain'd so thick, to heave;
 And heave it shall some weight, or break my back: —
 Work thou the way, — and thou shalt execute.”

Ibid. act v. sc. 7.

The character of *Richard the Third*, which had been opened in so masterly a manner in the *Concluding Part of Henry the Sixth*, is, in this play, developed in all its horrible grandeur.

It is, in fact, the picture of a demoniacal incarnation, moulding the passions and foibles of mankind, with super-human precision, to its own iniquitous purposes. Of this isolated and peculiar state of being Richard himself seems sensible, when he declares —

“ I have no brother, I am like no brother :
And this word love, which grey-beards call divine,
Be resident in men like one another,
And not in me: I am myself alone.” *

From a delineation like this Milton must have caught many of the most striking features of his Satanic portrait. The same union of unmitigated depravity, and consummate intellectual energy, characterises both, and renders what would otherwise be loathsome and disgusting, an object of sublimity and shuddering admiration.

Richard, stript as he is of all the softer feelings, and all the common charities, of humanity, possessed of

“ neither pity, love, nor fear,” †

and loaded with every dangerous and dreadful vice, would, were it not for his unconquerable powers of mind, be insufferably revolting. But, though insatiate in his ambition, envious, and hypocritical in his disposition, cruel, bloody, and remorseless in all his deeds, he displays such an extraordinary share of cool and determined courage, such alacrity and buoyancy of spirit, such constant self-possession, such an intuitive intimacy with the workings of the human heart, and such matchless skill in rendering them subservient to his views, as so far to subdue our detestation and abhorrence of his villany, that we, at length, contemplate this fiend in human shape with a mingled sensation of intense curiosity and grateful terror.

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xiv. p. 206. Henry VI. Pt. III. act v. sc. 6.

† Ibid. vol. xiv. p. 205.

The task, however, which Shakspeare undertook was, in one instance, more arduous than that which Milton subsequently attempted; for, in addition to the hateful constitution of Richard's moral character, he had to contend also against the prejudices arising from personal deformity, from a figure

————— "curtail'd of it's fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before it's time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up;" *

and yet, in spite of these striking personal defects, which were considered, also, as indicatory of the depravity and wickedness of his nature, the poet has contrived, through the medium of the high mental endowments just enumerated, not only to obviate disgust, but to excite extraordinary admiration.

One of the most prominent and detestable vices indeed, in Richard's character, his hypocrisy, connected, as it always is, in his person, with the most profound skill and dissimulation, has, owing to the various parts which it induces him to assume, most materially contributed to the popularity of this play, both on the stage, and in the closet. He is one who can

——— "frame his face to all occasions," †

and accordingly appears, during the course of his career, under the contrasted forms of a subject and a monarch, a politician and a wit, a soldier and a suitor, a sinner and a saint; and in all with such apparent ease and fidelity to nature, that while to the explorer of the human mind he affords, by his penetration and address, a subject of peculiar interest and delight, he offers to the practised performer a study well calculated to call forth his fullest and finest exertions. He, therefore, whose histrionic powers are adequate to the just exhi-

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xiv. p. 272. Act i. sc. 1.

† Ibid. vol. xiv. p. 116.

bition of this character, may be said to have attained the highest honours of his profession; and, consequently, the popularity of *Richard the Third*, notwithstanding the moral enormity of its hero, may be readily accounted for, when we recollect, that the versatile and consummate hypocrisy of the tyrant has been embodied by the talents of such masterly performers as Garrick, Kemble, Cook, and Kean.

So overwhelming and exclusive is the character of Richard, that the comparative insignificance of all the other persons of the drama may be necessarily inferred; they are reflected to us, as it were, from his mirror, and become more or less important, and more or less developed, as he finds it necessary to act upon them; so that our estimate of their character is entirely founded on his relative conduct, through which we may very correctly appreciate their strength or weakness.

The only exception to this remark is in the person of Queen Margaret, who, apart from the agency of Richard, and dimly seen in the darkest recesses of the picture, pours forth, in union with the deep tone of this tragedy, the most dreadful curses and imprecations; with such a wild and prophetic fury, indeed, as to involve the whole scene in tenfold gloom and horror.

We have to add that the moral of this play is great and impressive. Richard, having excited a general sense of indignation, and a general desire of revenge, and, unaware of his danger from having lost, through familiarity with guilt, all idea of moral obligation, becomes at length the victim of his own enormous crimes; he falls not unvisited by the terrors of conscience, for, on the eve of danger and of death, the retribution of another world is placed before him; the spirits of those whom he had murdered, reveal the awful sentence of his fate, and his bosom heaves with the infliction of eternal torture.

11. KING RICHARD THE SECOND: 1596. Our great poet having been induced to improve and re-compose the Dramatic History of *Henry the Sixth*, and to continue the character of Gloucester to the close of his usurpation, in the drama of *Richard the Third*, very natu-

rally, from the success which had crowned these efforts, reverted to the prior part of our national story for fresh subjects, and, led by a common principle of association, selected for the commencement of a new series of historical plays, which should form an unbroken chain with those that he had previously written, the reign of *Richard the Second*. On this account, therefore, and from the intimation of time, noticed by Mr. Chalmers, towards the conclusion of the first.* act, we are led to coincide with this gentleman in assigning the composition of *Richard the Second* to the year 1596.

Of the character of this unfortunate young prince, Shakspeare has given us a delineation in conformity with the general tone of history, but heightened by many exquisite and pathetic touches. Richard was beautiful in his person, and elegant in his manners†; affectionate, generous, and faithful in his attachments, and though intentionally neglected in his education, not defective in understanding. Accustomed, by his designing uncles, to the company of the idle and the dissipated, and to the unrestrained indulgence of his passions, we need not wonder that levity, ostentation, and prodigality, should mark his subsequent career, and should ultimately lead him to destruction.

Though the errors of his misguided youth are forcibly depicted in the drama, yet the poet has reserved his strength for the period of adversity. Richard, descending from his throne, discovers the unexpected virtues of humility, fortitude, and resignation, and becomes not only an object of love and pity, but of admiration; and there is nothing in the whole compass of our author's plays better calculated

* Supplemental Apology, p. 308.

† "This prince," observes Mr. Godwin, "is universally described to us as one of the most beautiful youths that was ever beheld; and from the portrait of him still existing in Westminster Abbey, however imperfect was the art of painting in that age, connoisseurs have inferred that his person was admirably formed, and his features cast in a mould of the most perfect symmetry. His appearance and manner were highly pleasing, and it was difficult for any one to approach him without being prepossessed in his favour."—*Life of Chaucer*, vol. iii. p. 170. 8vo. edit.

to produce, with full effect, these mingled emotions of compassion and esteem, than the passages which paint the sentiments and deportment of the fallen monarch. Patience, submission, and misery, were never more feelingly expressed than in the following lines :

“ *K. Rich.* What must the king do now ? Must he submit ?

The king shall do it. Must he be depos’d ?

The king shall be contented : Must he lose

The name of king ? o’God’s name, let it go :

I’ll give my jewels, for a set of beads ;

My gorgeous palace, for a hermitage ;

My gay apparel, for an alms-man’s gown :

My figur’d goblets, for a dish of wood ;

My scepter, for a palmer’s walking staff ;

My subjects, for a pair of carved saints ;

And my large kingdom for a little grave,

A little, little grave, an obscure grave : —

Or I’ll be buried in the king’s highway,

Some way of common trade, where subjects’ feet

May hourly trample on their sovereign’s head :” *

and with what an innate nobility of heart does he repress the homage of his attendants !

“ Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood

With solemn reverence ; throw away respect,

Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty,

For you have but mistook me all this while :

I live with bread like you, feel want, taste grief,

Need friends : — Subjected thus,

How can you say to me — I am a king ?” †

Nor does his conduct, in the hour of suffering and extreme humiliation, derogate from the philosophy of his sentiments. In that admirable opening of the second scene of the fifth act, where the Duke of York relates to his Duchess the entrance of Bolingbroke and Richard into London, the demeanour of the latter is thus portrayed : —

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xi. p. 108. Act iii. sc. 3.

† Ibid. vol. xi. p. 98. Act iii. sc. 2.

— “ Men’s eyes
 Did scowl on Richard ; no man cried, God save him ;
 No joyful tongue gave him his welcome home :
 But dust was thrown upon his sacred head ;
 Which with such gentle sorrow he shook off, —
 His face still combating with tears and smiles,
 The badges of his grief and patience, —
 That had not God, for some strong purpose, steel’d
 The hearts of men, they must perforce have melted,
 And barbarism itself have pitied him.” *

In representing Richard as falling by the hand of Sir Piers of Exton, Shakspeare has followed the Chronicle of Holinshed ; but there can be no doubt but this unhappy monarch either starved himself under the influence of despair, or was starved by the cruelty of his enemies. If in the account which Speed has given us of this tragedy, the most complete that we possess, the relation of Polydore Virgil be correct, nothing can be conceived more diabolical than the conduct of Henry and his agents. “ His diet being served in,” says that historian, “ and set before him in the wonted Princely manner, hee was not suffered either to taste, or touch thereof.” “ Surely,” adds Speed, in a manner which reflects credit on his sensibility, “ hee is not a man who at the report of so exquisite a barbarisme, as Richard’s enfamishment, feeles not chilling horror and detestation ; what if but for a justly condemned galley-slave so dying ? but how for an annointed King whose character (like that of holy orders) is indeleble ? ” †

Of the secondary characters of this play, “ Old John of Gaunt, time-honour’d Lancaster,” and his son Henry Bolingbroke, are brought forward with strict attention to the evidence of history ; the chivalric spirit, and zealous integrity of the first, and the cold, artificial features of the second, being struck off with great sharpness of outline, and strength of discrimination.

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xi. pp. 145, 146. Act v. sc. 2.

† Historie of Great Britaine, folio, pp. 766. 777. 2d edit. 1623.

12. HENRY THE FOURTH; PART THE FIRST: 1596;

13. HENRY THE FOURTH; PART THE SECOND: 1596:

That both these plays were written in the year 1596, will, we think, appear from consulting the arguments and quotations adduced by Mr. Malone to prove them the compositions of 1597 and 1598, and by Mr. Chalmers with the view of assigning them to the years 1596 and 1597; for while the *latter* gentleman has rendered it most probable, from the allusions which he has noticed in the play itself, that the *First Part* was written in 1596, the authorities and citations produced by the *former*, for the assignment of the *Second Part* to the year 1598, almost necessarily refer it, strange as it may appear, with only one exception *, and that totally indecisive, to the very same year which witnessed the composition of its predecessor, namely 1596! Influenced by this result, and by the observation of Dr. Johnson, that these dramas appear “to be two, only because they are too long to be one †, we have placed them under the same year, convinced, with Mr. Malone, that they could not be written *before* 1596; and induced, from the arguments to which he, and his immediate successor in chronological research have advanced, though with a different object, to consider them as not written *after* that period. ‡

* The exception alluded to consists in a quotation from Jonson's *Every Man out of his Humour*, first acted in 1599, as an authority for supposing the *Second Part* of *King Henry IV.* to have been written in 1598; and it is a remarkable circumstance, that both Mr. Malone and Mr. Chalmers have each committed an error in referring to this passage. It is in Act v. sc. 2. where Fastidius Brisk, in answer to Saviolina, says,—“No, lady, this is a kinsman to Justice Silence,” which Mr. Malone has converted into Justice Shallow; while Mr. Chalmers tells us, that “Ben Jonson, certainly, alluded to the Justice Silence of this play, in his *Every Man in his Humour*.”—Vide Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. ii. p. 288. and Chalmers's *Supplemental Apology*, p. 331.

† Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. xii. p. 3.

‡ I have not the smallest doubt but that Meres, in his *List of our author's Plays*, published in September, 1598, meant to include both parts under his mention of *Henry IV.*; speaking of the poet's excellence in both species of dramatic composition, he says, “for comedy, witness his *Gentlemen of Verona*, &c. &c.;—for tragedy, his *Richard II.* *Richard III.* *Henry IV.*”; and had he recollected the *Parts* of *Henry the Sixth*, he would have included them, also, under the bare title of *Henry VI.*

The inimitable genius of Shakspeare is no where more conspicuous than in the construction of these dramas, whether we consider the serious or the comic parts. In the former, which involve occurrences of the highest interest in a national point of view, the competition, and we may say, the contrast between Percy and the Prince of Wales, is supported with unrivalled talent and discrimination. Full of a fiery and uncontrollable courage, mingled with a portion of arrogance and spleen, generous, chivalric, and open, and breathing throughout a lofty, and even sublime spirit, Hotspur appears before us a youthful model of enthusiastic and impetuous heroism.

Yet, noble and exciting as this character must be pronounced, notwithstanding the very obvious alloy of a vindictive and ungovernable temper, it is completely overshadowed by that which is attributed to the Prince of Wales; a result which may, with a perfect conviction of certainty, be ascribed to the combination of two very powerful causes, — to the rare union, in fact, of great and varied intellectual energy, with the utmost amiability of disposition. Percy has but the virtues and accomplishments of a military adventurer, for in society he is boisterous, self-willed, and unaccommodating; while Henry, to bravery equally gallant and undaunted, adds all the endearing arts of social intercourse. He is gay, witty, gentle, and good-tempered, with such a high relish for humour and frolic as to lead him, through an over-indulgence of this propensity, into numerous scenes of dissipation and idleness, and into a familiarity with persons admirably well calculated, it is true, for the gratification of the most fertile and comic imagination, but who, in every moral and useful light, are altogether worthless and degraded.

From the contaminating influence of such dangerous connections, he is rescued by the vigour of his mind, and the goodness of his heart; for, possessing a clear and unerring conception of the character of Falstaff and his associates, though he tolerate their intimacy from a reprehensible love of wit and humour, he beholds, with a consciousness of self-abasement, the depravity of their principles,

and is guarded against any durable injury or impression from these dissolute companions of his sport.

The effect, however, of this temporary delusion is both in a moral and dramatic light, singularly striking; contemned and humiliated in the eyes of those who surround him, little expectancy is entertained, not even by the King himself, of any permanently vigorous or dignified conduct in his son; for though he has, more than once, exhibited himself equal to the occasion, however great, which has called him forth, he has immediately relapsed into his former wild and eccentric habits. When, therefore, annihilating the gloom which has hitherto obscured his lustre, and shaking off his profligate companions like "dew-drops from the lion's mane," he comes forward, strong in moral resolution, dignified without effort, firm without ostentation, and consistent without a sense of sacrifice, a denouement is produced, at once great, satisfactory, and splendid.*

If the serious parts of these plays, however, be powerful and characteristic, the comic portion is still more entitled to our admiration, being rich, original, and varied, in a degree unparalleled by any other writer.

There never was a character drawn, perhaps, so complete and individualized as that of Falstaff, nor one in which so many contrasted qualities are rendered subservient to the production of the highest entertainment and delight. In the compound, however, is to be found neither atrocious vices, nor any decided moral virtues; it is merely a tissue, though woven with matchless skill, of the agreeable and the disagreeable, the former so preponderating as to stamp the result with the power of imparting pleasurable emotion.

Sensuality, under all its forms, is the *vice* of Falstaff; *wit* and *gaiety* are his *virtues*.

* An ingenious Essay has been lately published by Mr. Luders, in which an attempt is made, with some success, to prove, that the youthful dissipation ascribed to Henry, by the chroniclers, is without any adequate foundation. It is probable, however, that Shakespeare, had he been aware of this, would have preferred the popular statement, from its superior aptitude for dramatic effect.

As to gratify his animal appetites, therefore, is the sole end and aim of his being, every faculty of his mind and body is directed exclusively to this purpose, and he is no further vicious, no further interesting and agreeable than may be necessary to the acquisition of his object. Had he succeeded but partially in the attainment of his views, and consequently by the means usually put in practice, he would have been contemptible, loathsome, and disgusting, but he has succeeded to an extent beyond all other men, and therefore by means of an extraordinary kind, and which have covered the fruition of his plans with an adventitious and even fascinating lustre.

The perfect Epicurism, in short, which he cultivates, requires for the obtention of its gratifications a multitude of brilliant and attractive qualifications; for, in order to run the full career of sensual enjoyment, associated as he was with a man of high rank, and considerable mental powers, it was necessary that he should render himself both highly acceptable and interesting, that he should assume the appearance or pretend to the possession of several virtues, and that he should be guilty of no very revolting or disgustful intemperance.

To perform this task, however, with unfailing effect, demanded, on the part of Falstaff, incessant intellectual vigour, and a perpetual command of temper, and these Shakspeare has bestowed upon him in their full plenitude. His wit is inexhaustible, his gaiety and good-humour undeviating, his address shrewd and discriminating, and, as the favourable opinion of his associates is, to a certain extent, essential to his enjoyments, he endeavours to impress the prince with confidence in his friendship and courage, his gratitude and fidelity, and to impose on his equals and inferiors a sense of his military and political importance. It is also requisite that, though an incorrigible lover of wine, of dainty fare, and of all libidinous delights, he should exhibit nothing either as the accompaniment or consequence of these pursuits, which should be beastly or loathsome; he is, therefore, never represented as in a state of intoxication, nor loaded with more infirmities than what corpulency produces; but is always himself,

crafty, sprightly, selfish, and intelligent, ever ready to invent and to enjoy the sport, the revel, and the jest.

Thus constituted, his social and intellectual qualities so blending with the dissolute propensities of his nature, that the epicure, and free-booter, the whore-monger and vain-glorious boaster, lose in the composition their native deformity, Falstaff becomes the most entertaining and seductive companion that the united powers of genius, levity, and laughter have ever, in the most felicitous hour of their mirth and fancy, created for the sons of men.

Yet, dangerous as such a delineation may appear, Shakspeare, with his usual attention to the best interests of mankind, has rendered it subservient to the most striking moral effects, both as these apply to the character of Falstaff himself, and to that of his temporary patron, the Prince of Wales ; for while the virtue, energy, and good sense of the latter are placed in the most striking point of view by his firm dismissal of a most fascinating and too endeared voluptuary, the permanently degrading consequences of sensuality are exhibited in their full strength during the career, and in the fate, of the former.

It is very generally found that great and splendid vices are mingled with concomitant virtues, which often ultimately lead to self-accusation, and to the salutary agonies of remorse ; but he who is deeply plunged in the grovelling pursuits of appetite is too frequently lost to all sense of shame, to all feeling of integrity or conscious worth. Polluted by the meanest depravities, not only religious principle ceases to affect the mind, but every thing which contributes to honour or to grandeur in the human character is gone for ever ; a catastrophe to which wit and humour, by rendering the sensualist a more self-deluded and self-satisfied being, lend the most powerful assistance.

Thus is it with Falstaff—to the last he remains the same, unrepentant, unreformed ; and, though shaken off by all that is valuable or good around him, dies the very sensualist which he had lived !

We may, therefore, derive from this character as much instruction as entertainment ; and, to the delight which we receive from the contemplation of a picture so rich and original, add a lesson of morality as awful and impressive as the history of human frailty can present.

In order fully to unfold the extraordinary character of Falstaff, it was necessary to throw around him a set of familiar associates, who might, through all the privacies of domestic life, lay open his follies and knaveries, while, at the same time, they themselves contributed, in no small degree, to the amusement of the scene. How admirably the poet has succeeded in this design, the spirited and glowing sketches of Bardolph, Pistol, and Mrs. Quickly, and of Justices Shallow and Silence, will bear an ever-during testimony. Than the scenes in which the two magistrates appear, nothing can be conceived more characteristically pleasant and original. The garrulity, vanity, and knavish simplicity of Shallow ; the asinine gravity of Silence when sober, and his irrepressible hilarity when tipsy ; Falstaff's exquisite appreciation of their characters, and his patronage of Shallow, are presented to us with a naïveté, raciness, and completeness of conception, which it is in vain to look for elsewhere.

We have further to remark, that the *fable* of the *Two Parts of Henry the Fourth* is connected with peculiar skill through the intervention of the *comic* incidents. It was essential, in fact, for the purposes of representation, that there should be a satisfactory close to each Part, while, at the same time, such a medium of communication should exist between the two, as to form a perfect whole. To effect this, the serious and the ludicrous departments of these dramas are conducted in a different way ; the former exhibiting two catastrophes while the latter has but one. Thus the death of Percy in the first play, and the death of Henry the Fourth in the second, form two judicious terminations of the tragic portion, while the rich vein of comedy running through both divisions, is only bounded by the *Reformation* of Henry the Fifth, and the *Fall* of his vicious but facetious companion ; a denouement at once natural and complete, and

springing from intrinsic causes, being the sole result of firmness and penetration in the prince, and of self-delusion in the knight.

14. THE MERCHANT OF VENICE: 1597. We are inclined to prefer this date to that of 1598, in consequence of the two allusions to time noticed by Mr. Chalmers in his *Chronology**; and which, as the epoch formerly fixed on by the commentators was founded merely on the fact of this play being registered on the 22d of July, 1598, a circumstance perfectly indecisive as to the period of its composition, ought consequently to possess the privilege of establishing its era.

Of the *three* plots which constitute this very interesting drama, namely that of the *Caskets*, that of the *Bond*, and that of the *Elopement* of Jessica, the first two appear to have formed the fable of a play entitled *The Jew*, long anterior to our author's production. "The Jew shown at the Bull," says Gosson in his *School of Abuse*, 1579, "representing the *greediness of worldly choosers*, and the *bloody minds of usurers* — these plays," says he, mentioning others at the same time, "are goode and sweete plays."†

Now, there can be no doubt that Shakspeare, in conformity to his usual custom, would avail himself of the labours of this his dramatic predecessor; but it is also evident that he had other resources. "The author of the old play of *The Jew*," observes Mr. Douce, "and Shakspeare in his *Merchant of Venice*, have not confined themselves to one source only in the construction of their plot; but, that the *Pecorone*, the *Gesta Romanorum*, and perhaps the old *Ballad of Gernutus*, have been respectively resorted to. It is however most probable that the original play was indebted chiefly, if not altogether to the *Gesta Romanorum*, which contained both the main incidents; and that Shakspeare expanded and improved them, partly from his own genius, and partly, as to the bond, from the *Pecorone*, where the coincidences are too manifest to leave any doubt. Thus, the scene being laid at Venice; the residence of the lady at Belmont; the

* Supplemental Apology, p. 348.

† Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 229.

introduction of a person bound for the principal; the double infraction of the bond, viz., the taking more or less than a pound of flesh and the shedding of blood, together with the after-incident of the ring, are common to the novel and the play. The whetting of the knife might perhaps have been taken from the *Ballad of Gernutus*. Shakspeare was likewise indebted to an authority that could not have occurred to the original author of the play in an English form; this was, Silvayn's *Orator*, as translated by Munday. From that work Shylock's reasoning before the senate is evidently borrowed; but at the same time it has been most skilfully improved." *

The *Orator* of Silvayn, translated by Munday from the French, was printed by Adam Islip in 1596, and forms one of Mr. Chalmers's authorities for assigning the composition of the *Merchant of Venice* to the year 1597.

Of the *two English Gesta* mentioned by Mr. Douce, that containing the story of the *Bond* is as old as the reign of Henry the Sixth, and though now only known to exist in manuscript †, might probably have been in print in the time of Shakspeare and the author of the elder play.

The *Gesta*, including the story of the *Caskets*, there is reason to think, was translated by Leland and revised by R. Robinson; for a memorandum relative to the first edition of the improved version, written by Robinson himself, and occurring in his *Eupolemia*, is thus worded:—"1577. A record of ancyent historyes intituled in Latin *Gesta Romanorum*, translated (auctore ut supponitur Johane Leylando antiquario) by mee perused corrected and bettered. Perused further by the wardens of the stationer's and printed first and last by Thomas Easte." ‡ If the supposition here recorded be correct, it is highly probable that Leland's translation is identical with that referred to

* Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 291.

† Preserved in the Harleian Collection, No. 7333, and containing 70 stories.

‡ Vide Douce's Illustrations, vol. ii. p. 424.

by Mr. Warton and Dr. Farmer * as printed by Wynkyn de Worde without date; though it must be remarked, that neither Mr. Herbert, nor Mr. Douce, nor Mr. Dibdin has been fortunate enough to discover such an impression. †

As many of the incidents in the Bond story of the *Merchant of Venice* possess a more striking resemblance to the first tale of the fourth day in the *Pecorone* of *Ser Giovanni*, than to either the *Gesta*, the *Ballad of Gernutus*, or the *Orator of Silvayn*, the probability is, that a version of this tale, if not of the entire collection, was extant in Shakspeare's days. *Il Pecorone*, though written almost two centuries before, was not published until 1558, when the first edition came forth at Milan.

The love and elopement of Jessica and Lorenzo have been noticed by Mr. Dunlop as bearing a similitude to the fourteenth tale of the second book of the *Novellino* of *Massuccio Di Salerno* ‡; but it must be recollected, that until the play alluded to by Gosson can be produced, it is impossible to ascertain to whom Shakspeare is most peculiarly indebted for the materials of his complicated plot.

There is much reason to conclude, however, that the felicitous union of the two principal actions of this drama, that concatenation of cause and effect, which has formed them into a whole, is to be ascribed, almost exclusively, to the judgment and the art of Shakspeare. There is also another unity of equal moment, seldom found wanting, indeed, in any of the genuine plays of our poet, but which is particularly observable in this, that *unity of feeling* which we have once before had occasion to notice, and which, in the present instance, has given an uniform, but an extraordinary, tone to every part of the fable. Thus the unparalleled nature of the trial between the Jew

* Warton's History of English Poetry, vol. ii. p. 18.; vol. iii. p. lxxxiii.; and Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 229.

† "I have examined numerous bibliographical treatises and catalogues for this edition," says Mr. Dibdin, "without effect. It does not appear to have been in Dr. Farmer's own collection." — *Typographical Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 366.

‡ Dunlop's History of Fiction, 1st edit. vol. ii. p. 336.

and his debtor, required, in order to produce that species of dramatic consistency so essential to the illusion of the reader or spectator, that the other important incident of the piece should assume an equal cast of singularity; the enigma, therefore, of the caskets is a most suitable counterpart to the savage eccentricity of the bond, and their skilful combination effects the probability arising from similitude of nature and intimacy of connection.

Yet the ingenuity of the fable is surpassed by the truth and originality of the characters that carry it into execution. Avarice and revenge, the prominent vices of Shylock, are painted with a pencil so discriminating, as to appear very distinct from the same passions in the bosom of a Christian. The peculiar circumstances, indeed, under which the Jews have been placed for so many centuries, would of themselves be sufficient, were the national feelings correctly caught, to throw a peculiar colouring over all their actions and emotions; but to these were unhappily added, in the age of Shakspeare, the most rooted prejudices and antipathies; an aversion, indeed, partaking of hatred and horror, was indulged against this persecuted people, and consequently the picture which Shakspeare has drawn exhibits not only a faithful representation of Jewish sentiments and manners, the necessary result of a singular dispensation of Providence, but it embodies in colours, of almost preternatural strength, the Jew as he appeared to the eye of the shuddering Christian.

In Shylock, therefore, while we behold the manners and the associations of the Hebrew mingling with every thing he says and does, and touched with a verisimilitude and precision which excite our astonishment, we, at the same time, perceive, that, influenced by the prepossessions above-mentioned, the poet has clothed him with passions which would not derogate from a personification of the evil principle itself. He is, in fact, in all the lighter parts of his character, a generical exemplar of Judaism, but demonized, individualized, and rendered awfully striking and horribly appalling by the attribution of such unrelenting malice, as we will hope, for the honour of our species, was never yet accumulated, with such intensity, in any human breast.

So vigorous, however, so masterly is the delineation of this Satanic character, and so exactly did it, until of late years, chime in with the bigotry of the Christian world, that no one of our author's plays has experienced greater popularity. Fortunately the time has now arrived when the Jew and the Christian can meet with all the feelings of humanity about them; a state of society which, more than any other, is calculated to effect that conversion for which every disciple of our blessed religion will assuredly pray.

There is, also, to be found in this beautiful play a charm for the most gentle and amiable minds, a vein of dignified melancholy and pensive sweetness which endears it to every heart, and which fascinates the more as affording the most welcome relief to the merciless conduct of its leading character. What, for instance, can be more soothing and delightful to the feelings, than the generous and disinterested friendship of Antonio, when contrasted with the hard and selfish nature of Shylock; what more noble than the sublime resignation of the merchant, when opposed to the deadly and relentless hatred of his prosecutor! Never was friendship painted more intense and lovely than in the parting scene of Antonio and Bassanio; Salarino, speaking of the former, says, —

“ A kinder gentleman treads not the earth.
 I saw Bassanio and Antonio part:
 Bassanio told him, he would make some speed
 Of his return: he answer'd — ‘ Do not so,
 Slubber not business for my sake, Bassanio,
 But stay the very riping of the time;
 And for the Jew's bond, which he hath of me,
 Let it not enter in your mind of love:
 Be merry; and employ your chiefest thoughts
 To courtship, and such fair ostents of love
 As shall conveniently become you there:’
*And even there, his eye being big with tears,
 Turning his face, he put his hand behind him,
 And with affection wond'rous sensible
 He wrung Bassanio's hand, and so they parted.*
 Salarino. I think, he only loves the world for him.” *

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 294, 295. Act ii. sc. 8.

Nor do the female personages of the drama contribute less to this grateful effect: the sensible, the spirited, the eloquent *Portia*, who has a principal share in the business of both plots, is equally distinguished for the tenderness of her disposition and the goodness of her heart, and her pleadings for mercy in behalf of the injured Antonio will dwell on the ear of pity and admiration to the last syllable of recorded time.

With a similar result do we enter into the character of *Jessica*, whose artlessness, simplicity, and affectionate temper, excite, in an uncommon degree, the interest of the reader. The opening of the fifth act, where Lorenzo and Jessica are represented conversing on a summer's night, in the avenue at Belmont, and listening with rapture to the sounds of music, produces, occurring as it does immediately after the soul-harrowing scene in the court of justice, the most enchanting emotion; it breathes, indeed, a repose so soft and delicious, that the mind seems dissolving in tranquil luxury:

“ How sweet the moon-light sleeps upon this bank !
 Here will we sit, and let the sounds of musick
 Creep in our ears; soft stillness, and the night,
 Become the touches of sweet harmony.” †

Shakspeare was an enthusiast in music in a musical age; and though his subsequent encomium upon it be somewhat extravagant, and his reprobation of the man who “ is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,” undeservedly harsh and severe, yet are they both more applicable and judicious than the flippant and indiscriminating censure of Mr. Steevens, whose note on the subject has met with its due castigation from the pen of Mr. Douce, who, after stigmatising the commentator's disingenuous effort to throw an odium on this recreation, in conjunction with the feeble aid of an illiberal passage from Lord Chesterfield's *Letters*, justly and beautifully adds, that “ It is a science which, from its intimate and natural connexion with

* Reed's Shakspeare vol. vii. p. 373. Act v.

poetry and painting, deserves the highest attention and respect. He that is happily qualified to appreciate the *better parts* of music, will never seek them in the society so emphatically reprobated by the noble lord, nor altogether in the way he recommends. He will not lend an ear to the vulgarity and tumultuous roar of the tavern catch, or the delusive sounds of martial clangour; but he will enjoy this heavenly gift, this exquisite and soul-delighting sensation, in the temples of his God, or in the peaceful circles of domestic happiness: he will pursue the blessings and advantages of it with ardour, and turn aside from its abuses." *

The fifth act of this play, which consists of but one scene, appears to have been intended by the poet to remove the painful impressions incident to the nature of his previous plot; it is light, elegant, and beautifully written, and, though the main business of the drama finishes with the termination of the fourth act, it is not felt as an incumbrance, but on the contrary is beheld and enjoyed as a graceful, animated, and consolatory close to one of the most perfect productions of its author.

15. HAMLET: 1597. That this tragedy had been performed before 1598 is evident from Gabriel Harvey's note in Speght's edition of Chaucer, as quoted by Mr. Malone †; and, from the intimations of time brought forward by Mr. Chalmers ‡, we are induced to adopt the era of this gentleman, placing the first sketch of *Hamlet* early in 1597, and its revision with additions in 1600. § Soon after which, namely, on the 26th of July, 1602, it was entered on the Stationers' book, the first edition hitherto discovered being printed in the year 1604.

No character in our author's plays has occasioned so much dis-

* Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. pp. 269, 270.

† This memorandum is as follows: — "The younger sort take much delight in Shakspeare's *Venus and Adonis*; but his *Lucrece*, and his tragedy of *Hamlet*, Prince of Denmark, have it 'in them to please the wiser sort, 1598.'" — Vide Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. xviii. p. 2.

‡ Supplemental Apology, pp. 351, 352.

§ Ibid. p. 354.

cussion, so much contradictory opinion, and, consequently, so much perplexity, as that of *Hamlet*. Yet we think it may be proved that Shakspeare had a clear and definite idea of it throughout all its seeming inconsistencies, and that a very few lines taken from one of the monologues of this tragedy, will develope the ruling and efficient feature which the poet held steadily in his view, and through whose unintermitting influence every other part of the portrait has received a peculiar modification. We are told, as the result of a deep but unsatisfactory meditation on the mysteries of another world, on "the dread of something after death," that

— "thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the *pale cast of thought* ;
And enterprizes of great pith and moment,
With this regard, their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action." *

Now this *pale cast of thought* and its consequences, which, had not Hamlet been interrupted by the entrance of Ophelia, he would have himself applied to his own singular situation, form the very essence, and give rise to the prominent defects of his character. It is evident, therefore, that Shakspeare intended to represent him as variable and indecisive in action, and that he has founded this want of volition on one of those peculiar constitutions of the mental and moral faculties which have been designated by the appellation of *genius*, a combination of passions and associations which has led to all the useful energies, and all the exalted eccentricities of human life; and of which, in one of its most exquisite but speculative forms, Hamlet presents us with perhaps the only instance on *theatric* record.

To a frame of mind naturally strong and contemplative, but rendered by extraordinary events sceptical and intensely thoughtful, he unites an undeviating love of rectitude, a disposition of the gentlest

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 174. Act iii. sc. 1.

kind, feelings the most delicate and pure, and a sensibility painfully alive to the smallest deviation from virtue or propriety of conduct. Thus, while gifted to discern and to suffer from every moral aberration in those who surround him, his powers of action are paralysed in the first instance, by the unconquerable tendency of his mind to explore, to their utmost ramification, all the bearings and contingencies of the meditated deed ; and in the second, by that tenderness of his nature which leads him to shrink from the means which are necessary to carry it into execution. Over this irresolution and weakness, the result, in a great measure, of emotions highly amiable, and which in a more congenial situation had contributed to the delight of all who approached him, Shakspeare has thrown a veil of melancholy so sublime and intellectual, as by this means to constitute him as much the idol of the philosopher, and the man of cultivated taste, as he confessedly is of those who feel their interest excited principally through the medium of the sympathy and compassion which his ineffective struggles to act up to his own approved purpose naturally call forth.

It may be useful, however, in order to give more strength and precision to this general outline, to enter into a few of the leading particulars of Hamlet's conduct. He is represented at the opening of the play as highly distressed by the sudden death of his father, and the hurried and indecent nuptials of his mother, when the awful appearance of the spectre overwhelms him with astonishment, unhinges a mind already partially thrown off its bias, and fills it with indelible apprehension, suspicion, and dismay. For though, on the first communication of the murder, his bosom burns with the thirst of vengeance, yet reflection and the gentleness of his disposition soon induce him to regret that he has been chosen as the instrument of effecting it,

“ That ever he was born to set it right ; ”

and then, under the influence of this reluctance, he begins to question the validity and the lawfulness of the medium through which he had

received his information, describing with admirable self-consciousness, the vacillation of his will, and the tendency of his temper : —

“ The spirit that I have seen
May be the Devil, and the Devil hath power
T’ assume a pleasing shape ; yea, and perhaps,
Out of my weakness and my melancholy, —
Abuses me to damn me.” *

Here, therefore, on a structure of mind originally indecisive as to volition, on feelings rendered more than usually sensitive and serious by domestic misfortune, operate causes calculated, in a very extraordinary degree, to augment the sources of irresolution and distress. The imagination of Hamlet, agitated and inflamed by a visitation from the world of spirits, is lost amid the mazes of conjecture, amid thoughts which roam with doubt and terror through all the labyrinths of fate and superhuman agency ; whilst, at the same time, indignation at the crime of his uncle, and aversion to the vindictive task which has been imposed upon him, raise a conflict of passion within his breast.

Determined, however, if possible, to obey what seems both a commission from heaven, and a necessary filial duty ; but sensible that the wild workings of imagination, and the tumult of contending emotions have so far unsettled his mind, as to render his control over it at times precarious and imperfect, and that consequently he may be liable to betray his purpose, he adopts the expedient of counterfeiting madness, in order that if any thing should escape him in an unguarded moment, it may, from being considered as the effect of derangement, fail to impede his designs.

And here again the bitterness of his destiny meets him ; for, with the view of disarming suspicion as to his real intention, he finds it requisite to impress the king and his courtiers with the idea, that disappointed love is the real basis of his disorder ; justly inferring,

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 162. Act ii. sc. 2.

that as his attachment to Ophelia was known, and still more so the tenderness of his own heart, any harsh treatment of her, without an adequate provocation, must infallibly be deemed a proof, not only of insanity, but of the cause whence it sprang; since though some reserve on her part had been practised, in obedience to her father's commands, it could not, without a dereliction of reason, have produced such an entire change in his conduct and disposition. And such indeed would have been the result, had Hamlet possessed a perfect command of himself; but his feelings overpowered his consistency, and the very part which he had to play with Ophelia, was one of the most excruciating of his afflictions; for he tells us, and tells us truly, that

“ ‘ He ’ lov’d Ophelia; forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up ‘ his ’ sum; ” *

consequently what he suffers on this occasion, on this compulsory treatment, as it were, of the being dearest to his heart, gives him one of the strongest claims upon our sympathy. With what agony he pursues this line of conduct, and how foreign it is to every feeling of the man, appears at the close of his celebrated soliloquy on the expediency of suicide, and just previous to the rudest and most sarcastic instance of his behaviour towards Ophelia. That hapless maiden suddenly crosses him; when, starting at her sight, and forgetting his assumed character, he exclaims, in an exquisite tone of solemnity and pathos—

“ Soft you, now !
The fair Ophelia : — Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember’d.” †

It is impossible, we think, to compare this passage, this burst of undisguised emotion, with the tenour of the immediately subsequent

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 338. Act v. sc. 1.

† Ibid. vol. xviii. p. 175. Act iii. sc. 1.

dialogue, without the deepest commiseration for the fate of the unfortunate prince.

In this play, as in *King Lear*, we have madness under its real and its assumed aspect, and in both instances they are accurately discriminated. We find Lear and Ophelia constantly recurring, either directly or indirectly, to the actual causes of their distress; but it was the business of Edgar and of Hamlet, to place their observers on a wrong scent, and to divert their vigilance from the genuine sources of their grief, and the objects of their pursuit. This is done with undeviating firmness by Edgar; but Hamlet occasionally suffers the poignancy of his feelings, and the agitation of his mind, to break in upon his plan, when, heedless of what was to be the ostensible foundation of his derangement, his love for Ophelia, he permits his indignation to point, and on one occasion almost unmasked, towards the guilt of his uncle. In every other instance, he personates insanity with a skill which indicates the highest order of genius, and imposes on all but the king, whose conscience, perpetually on the watch, soon enables him to detect the inconsistencies and the drift of his nephew.

It has been objected to the character of Hamlet, whose most striking feature is profound melancholy, that its keeping is broken in upon by an injudicious admixture of humour and gaiety; but he who is acquainted with the workings of the human heart, will be far, very far indeed, from considering this as any deviation from the truth of nature. Melancholy, when not the offspring of an ill-spent life, or of an habitual bad temper, but the consequence of mere casualties and misfortunes, or of the vices and passions of others, operating on feelings too gentle, delicate, and susceptible, to bear up against the ruder evils of existence, will sometimes spring with playful elasticity from the pressure of the heaviest burden, and dissipating, for a moment, the anguish of a breaking heart, will, like a sun-beam in a winter's day, illumine all around it with a bright, but transient ray, with the sallies of humorous wit, and

even with the hilarity of sportive simplicity ; an interchange which serves but to render the returning storm more deep and gloomy.

Thus is it with Hamlet in those parts of this inimitable tragedy in which we behold him suddenly deviating into mirth and jocularity ; they are scintillations which only light us

“ to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow,” *

for no where do we perceive the depth of his affliction and the energy of his sufferings more distinctly than when under these convulsive efforts to shake off the incumbent load.

Of that infirmity of purpose which distinguishes Hamlet during the pursuit of his revenge, and of that exquisite self-deceit by which he endeavours to disguise his own motives from himself, no clearer instance can be given, than from the scene where he declines destroying the usurper because he was in the act of prayer, and might therefore go to heaven, deferring his death to a period when, being in liquor or in anger, he was thoroughly ripe for perdition ; an enormity of sentiment and design totally abhorrent to the real character of Hamlet, which was radically amiable, gentle, and compassionate, but affording a striking proof of that hypocrisy which, owing to the untowardness of his fate, he was constantly exercising on himself. Struck with the symptoms of repentance in Claudius, his resentment becomes softened ; and at all times unwilling, from the tenderness of his nature, and the acuteness of his sensibility, to fulfil his supposed duty, and execute retributive justice on his uncle, he endeavours to find some excuse for his conscious want of resolution, some pretext, however far-fetched or discordant with the genuine motive, to shield him from his own weakness.

One remarkable effect of this perpetual contest in the bosom of Hamlet between a sense of the duty, enjoined as it were by heaven, and his aversion to the means which could alone secure its accom-

* Paradise Lost, book i. l. 64.

plishment, has been to throw an interest around him of the most powerful and exciting nature. It is an interest not arising from extrinsic causes, from any anxiety as to the completion of the meditated vengeance, or from the intervention of any casual incidents which may tend to hasten or retard the catastrophe, but exclusively springing from our attachment to the person of Hamlet. We contemplate with a mixture of admiration and compassion the very virtues of Hamlet becoming the bane of his earthly peace, virtues which, in the tranquillity either of public or private life, would have crowned him with love and honour, serving but, in the tempest which assails him, to wreck his hopes, and accelerate his destruction. In fact, the very doubts and irresolution of Hamlet endear him to our hearts, and at the same time condense around him an almost breathless anxiety, for, while we confess them to be the offspring of all that is lovely, gentle, and kind, we cannot but perceive their fatal tendency, and we shudder at the probable event.

It is thus that the character of Hamlet, notwithstanding the veil of meditative abstraction which the genius of philosophic melancholy has thrown over it, possesses a species of enchantment for all ranks and classes. Its popularity, indeed, appears to have been immediate and great, for, in 1604, Anthony Scoloker, in a dedication to his poem, entitled "*Daiphantus*," tells us, that his "epistle" should be "like friendly Shake-speare's tragedies, where the commedian rides, when the tragedian stands on tiptoe: *Faith it should please all, like prince Hamlet.*" *

We should bear in mind, however, that the favour of the public must, in part, have been attached to this play through the vast variety of incident and characters which it unfolds, from its rapid interchange of solemnity, pathos, and humour, and more particularly from the awful, yet grateful terror which the shade of buried Denmark diffuses over the scene.

* Vide Douce's *Illustrations of Shakspeare*, vol. ii. p. 265.

That a belief in *Spiritual Agency* has been universally and strongly impressed on the mind of man from the earliest ages of the world, must be evident to every one who peruses the writings of the Old Testament. It is equally clear that, with little but exterior modification, this doctrine has passed from the East into Europe, flowing through Greece and Rome to modern times. It is necessary, however, to a just comprehension of the subject, that it be distinctly separated into two branches,—into the *Agency of Angelic Spirits*, and into the *Agency of the Spirits of the Departed*, as these will be found to rest on very dissimilar bases.

To the *Agency of Angelic Spirits*, both good and bad, and to their operation on, and influence over the intellect and affairs of men, the records of our religion bear the most direct and indubitable testimony; nor is it possible to disjoin a full admission of this intercourse from any faith in its Scriptures, whether Jewish or Christian. “That the holy angels,” observes Bishop Horsley, “are often employed by God in his government of this sublunary world, is indeed clearly to be proved by holy writ: that they have powers over the matter of the universe analogous to the powers over it which men possess, greater in extent, but still limited, is a thing which might reasonably be supposed, if it were not declared: but it seems to be confirmed by many passages of holy writ, from which it seems also evident that they are occasionally, for certain specific purposes, commissioned to exercise those powers to a prescribed extent. That the evil angels possessed, before the Fall, the like powers, which they are still occasionally permitted to exercise for the punishment of wicked nations, seems also evident. *That they have a power over the human sensory (which is part of the material universe), which they are occasionally permitted to exercise, by means of which they may inflict diseases, suggest evil thoughts, and be the instruments of temptations, must also be admitted.*” *

* Sermons, vol. ii. p. 369.

Of a doctrine so consolatory as the ministration and guardianship of benevolent spirits, one of the most striking instances is afforded us by the Book of Job, perhaps the most ancient composition in existence; it is where Elihu, describing the sick man on his bed, declares, that —

“ As his soul draweth near to the Grave,
And his life to the Ministers of Death,
Surely will there be over him an *Angel*,
An *Intercessor*, one of *The Thousand*,
Who shall instruct the Sufferer in his duty;” *

and from the same source was the awful but monitory vision described in the fourth chapter of this sublime poem.

Subsequent poets have embraced with avidity a system so friendly to man, and so delightful to an ardent and devotional imagination. Thus Hesiod, repeating the oriental tradition, seems happy in augmenting the number of our heavenly protectors to *thirty thousand*,
Τρὶς γὰρ μυρίαί:—

“ Invisible the Gods are ever nigh,
Pass through the midst and bend th’ all-seeing eye:
The men who grind the poor, who wrest the right,
Awless of Heaven’s revenge, are naked to their sight.
For *thrice ten thousand* holy Demons rove
This breathing world, the delegates of Jove.
Guardians of man, their glance alike surveys,
The upright judgments, and th’ unrighteous ways.” ELTON.

But, next to the sacred writers, and more immediately derived from their inspiration, has this heavenly superintendence been best described by two of our own poets: by Spenser with his customary piety, sweetness, and simplicity:—

“ And is there care in heaven? and is there love
In heavenly spirits to these creatures bace,
That may compassion of their evils move?
There is: — else much more wretched were the cace

* Vide Good’s Translation of Job, part v. chap. 33. ver. 22, 23. — I have ventured to alter the language, though I have strictly adhered to the import of the last line. *Ministers of Death* have also been substituted for *Destinies*.

Of men than beasts: But O! th' exceeding grace
Of Highest God that loves his creatures so,
And all his workes with mercy doth embrace,
That blessed Angels he sends to and fro,
To serve to wicked man, to serve his wicked foe!

How oft do they their silver bowers leave
To come to succour us that succour want!
How oft do they with golden pineons cleave
The flitting skyes, like flying pursuivant,
Against fowle feends to ayd us militant!
They for us fight, they watch and dewly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
And all for love and nothing for reward:
O, why should Hevenly God to men have such regard;”*

by Milton, in a strain of greater sublimity, and with more philosophic dignity and grace:—

“ Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep:
All these with ceaseless praise his works behold
Both day and night: How often from the steep
Of echoing hill or thicket have we heard
Celestial voices to the midnight air,
Sole, or responsive each to others note,
Singing their great Creator? oft in bands
While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk,
With heavenly touch of instrumental sounds
In full harmonick number join'd, their songs
Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to Heaven.”†

But mankind, not satisfied with this angelic interposition, though founded on *indisputable authority*, and exercised on their behalf, has, in every age and nation, fondly clung to the idea, that the *souls* or

* Vide Todd's Spenser, vol. iv. pp. 1, 2, 3. Faerie Queene, book ii. canto 8. stanz. 1 and 2.

† Todd's Milton, vol. iii. pp. 138, 139. Paradise Lost, book iv. l. 677.—Shakspeare, it may be remarked, occasionally alludes to the same species of spiritual hierarchy, and, in the very play we are engaged upon, Laertes says—

“ A minist'ring angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.” Act. v. sc. 1.

Spirits of the Dead have also a communication with the living, and and that they occasionally, either as happy or as suffering shades, re-appear on this sublunary scene.

The common suggestions and associations of the human mind have laid the foundation for this general belief; man has ever indulged the hope of another state of existence, feeling within him an assurance, a kind of intuitive conviction, emanating from the Deity, that we are not destined as the beasts to perish. It is true, says Homer,

“ 'Tis true, 'tis certain, man though dead, retains
Part of himself; th' immortal mind remains;” *

but to this mental immortality, which is firmly sanctioned by religion, affection, grief, and superstition have added a vast variety of unauthorised circumstances. The passions and attachments which were incident to the individual in his earthly, are attributed to him in his spiritual state; he is supposed to be still agitated by terrestrial objects and relations, to delight in the scenes which he formerly inhabited, to feel for and to protect the persons with whom he was formerly connected, to be actuated, in short, by emotions of love, anger, and revenge, and to be in a situation which admits of receiving benefit or augmented suffering through the attentions or negligence of surviving friends. Accordingly the spirit or apparition of the deceased was supposed occasionally to revisit the glimpses of the moon, and to become visible to its dearest relatives or associates, for the purpose of admonishing, complaining, imploring, warning, or directing.

Now all these additions to the abstract idea of immortality, though perhaps naturally arising from the affectionate regrets, the conscious weakness, and the eager curiosity of man, and therefore universal as his diffusion over the globe, are totally unwarranted by our only safe and sure guide, the records of the Bible; for though we are taught

* Pope's Iliad, book xxiii.

that man exists in another state, and disembodied of the organs which he possessed whilst an inhabitant of this planet, we are also told, that he is supplied with a new body, of a very different nature, and, without a miracle, indiscernible by our present senses. We are told by St. Peter, that even the body of our Saviour after his resurrection could only be seen through the operation of a miracle: "Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be visible: *Et dedit eum manifestum fieri.* Vulg. He was no longer," observes Bishop Horsley, "in a state to be naturally visible to any man. His body was indeed risen, but it was become that body which St. Paul describes in the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, which, having no sympathy with the gross bodies of this earthly sphere, nor any place among them, must be indiscernible to the human organs, till they shall have undergone a similar refinement. *

We have no foundation, therefore, in Scripture, nor, according to its doctrine, can we have, for attaching any credibility to the re-appearance of the Departed; yet, independent of the predisposition of the human mind, from the influence of affectionate regret, to think upon the dead as if still present to our wants and wishes, a state of feeling which, in Celtic poetry, has given birth to an interesting system of mythology entirely built on apparitional intercourse†, the relations which we possess of the apparent return of the dead, are so numerous, and, in many instances, so unexceptionably attested, that they have led to several ingenious, and, indeed, partially successful attempts to account for them. One or two of these attempts, as terminating in some curious speculations on the character of *Hamlet*, and on the *apparition of his father*, it will be necessary more particularly to notice.

* Horsley's Nine Sermons on the Nature of the Evidence by which the Fact of our Lord's Resurrection is established, p. 209.

† See an elegant and very satisfactory Dissertation on the "Mythology of the Poems of Ossian," by Professor Richardson of Glasgow, in Graham's "Essay on the Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian," 8vo. 1807.

A firm belief in *Visitation from the Spirits of the Deceased* was so strong a feature in the age of Shakspeare, and the immediately subsequent period, and was supported by such an accumulation of testimony, that it roused the exertions of a few individuals of a philosophical turn of mind, to account for what they would not venture to deny; Lavaterus* and others on the continent, and Scot† and Mede‡ in our own country, attempting to prove that these appearances were not occasioned by the return of the dead, but by the permitted and personal agency of good or evil angels, who, as we occasionally find in Scripture, and more particularly in the case of Samuel, before the Witch of Endor, were allowed to assume the resemblance of the deceased.

But, though this hypothesis be constructed on a species of spiritual agency which we know to have existed, yet are the instances for which it is adopted by these writers much too trivial and frequent to secure to their solution a rational assent; nor is the presence of these superior intelligences, as objects of sight, at all necessary to account for the phenomena in question.

For it is obvious, that if relying, with Bishop Horsley, on the evidence of sacred history, we believe that the Deity oftentimes acts mediately, through his agents, on the human sensory, as a part of the material universe, thereby producing diseases and morbid impressions, the same effects will result. Not that we conceive matter can, in any degree, modify the thinking principle itself, but its organisation being the sole medium through which the intellect communicates with the external world, it is evident that any derangement of the structure of the brain must render the perceptions of the mind, as to material existences, imperfect, false, and illusory.

* Lavaterus was translated into English by R. H. and printed by Henry Benneyman, in 1572. 4to.

† See his Treatise on Divels and Spirits, annexed to his Discoverie of Witchcraft, 4to. 1584.

‡ Mede was born in 1586 and died in 1638, and the doctrine in question is to be found in the fortieth of his fifty-three Discourses, published after his decease.

It is remarkable that a doctrine similar to this was produced in the last century to account for the spectral appearances of second sight, by a Scotchman too, himself an Islander, who has furnished us with an ample collection of instances of this singular visitation*; this gentleman contending, that these prophetic scenes are exhibited not to the sight, but merely to the imagination. He adds, with great sagacity, "as these Representations or waking Dreams, according to the best Enquiry I could make, are communicated (unless it be seldom) but to one Person at once, though there should be several Persons, and even some Seers in Company, those Representations seem rather communicated to the Imagination (as said is) than the Organ of Sight; seeing it is impossible, if made always to the latter, but all Persons directing their sight the same Way, having their Faculty of Sight alike perfect and equally disposed, must see it in common." †

We must refer, however, to the present day for demonstration, founded on actual experience, that the appearance of ghosts and apparitions is, in every instance, the *immediate* effect of certain partial but morbid affections of the brain; yet, it must be remarked, that the ingenious physiologists who have proved this curious fact, entirely confine themselves, and perhaps very justly, to physical phenomena, professedly discarding the consideration of any higher efficiency in the series of causation than what appears as the result of diseased organisation; so that their discovery, though completely overturning the common superstition as to the return of the departed spirit, or the visible interference of angelic agency, is yet very reconcileable with the pneumatology of Bishop Horsley.

In 1805, Dr. Alderson of Hull read to the Literary Society of that place, and published in 1811, an Essay on Apparitions, the object of which is to prove that the immediate cause of these spectral visita-

* "A Treatise on the Second Sight, Dreams, Apparitions, &c. By Theophilus Insulanus." 8vo. Edinb. 1763.

† Reprint of 1815, annexed to Kirk's "Secret Commonwealth," p. 74.

tions "lies, not in the perturbed spirits of the departed, but in the diseased organisation of the living." For this purpose he relates several cases of this hallucination which fell under his own observation and treatment, and which, as distinguished from partial insanity, from delirium, somnambulism, and reverie, were completely removed by medical means.

In 1813, Dr. Ferriar of Manchester published, on a more extended scale, "An Essay towards a Theory of Apparitions," whose aim and result are precisely similar to the anterior production of Dr. Alderson; both admitting the reality and universality of spectral impressions, and both attributing them to partial affections of the brain, independent of any sensible external agency; it is also remarkable that both have applied their speculations and experience in illustration of the character of *Hamlet*, a circumstance which has, in a great measure, led to these general observations on the progress of opinion as to the nature of apparitional visitation.

The state of mind which Shakspeare exhibits to us in *Hamlet*, as the consequence of conflicting passions and events, operating on a frame of acute sensibility, Dr. Ferriar has termed *latent lunacy*. "The subject of *latent lunacy*," he remarks, "is an untouched field, which would afford the richest harvest to a skilful and diligent observer. Cervantes has immortalized himself, by displaying the effect of one bad species of composition on the hero of his satire, and Butler has delineated the evils of epidemic, religious, and political frenzy; but it remains as a task for some delicate pencil, to trace the miseries introduced into private families, by a state of mind, which 'sees more devils than vast hell can hold,' and which yet affords no proof of derangement, sufficient to justify the seclusion of the unhappy invalid.

"This is a species of distress, on which no novelist has ever touched, though it is unfortunately increasing in real life; though it may be associated with worth, with genius, and with the most specious demonstrations (for a while) of general excellence.

"Addison has thrown out a few hints on this subject in one of the *Spectators*; it could not escape so critical an observer of human

infirmities ; and I have always supposed, that if the character of Sir Roger de Coverley had been left untouched by Steele, it would have exhibited some interesting traits of this nature. As it now appears, we see nothing more than occasional absence of mind ; and the peculiarities of an humourist, contracted by retirement, and by the obsequiousness of his dependants.

“ It has often occurred to me, that Shakspeare’s character of *Hamlet* can only be understood, on this principle. He feigns madness, for political purposes, while the poet means to represent his understanding as really, (and unconsciously to himself) unhinged by the cruel circumstances in which he is placed. The horror of the communication made by his father’s spectre ; the necessity of belying his attachment to an innocent and deserving object ; the certainty of his mother’s guilt ; and the supernatural impulse by which he is goaded to an act of assassination, abhorrent to his nature, are causes sufficient to overwhelm and distract a mind previously disposed to ‘ weakness and to melancholy,’ and originally full of tenderness and natural affection. By referring to the book, it will be seen, that his real insanity is only developed after the mock play. Then, in place of a systematic conduct, conducive to his purposes, he becomes irresolute, inconsequent, and the plot appears to stand unaccountably still. Instead of striking at his object, he resigns himself to the current of events, and sinks at length, ignobly, under the stream.” *

* Essay on the Theory of Apparitions, pp. 111—115.—The following very curious instance of a striking renewal of terrific impressions, is given by the Doctor in this entertaining little work : it was communicated to him, he tells us, by the gentleman who underwent the deception : —

“ He was benighted, while travelling alone, in a remote part of the Highlands of Scotland, and was compelled to ask shelter for the evening at a small lonely hut. When he was to be conducted to his bed-room, the landlady observed, with mysterious reluctance, that he would find the window very insecure. On examination, part of the wall appeared to have been broken down, to enlarge the opening. After some enquiry, he was told, that a pedlar, who had lodged in the room a short time before, had committed suicide, and was found hanging behind the door, in the morning. According to the superstition of the country, it was deemed improper to remove the body through the door of the house ; and

Dr. Alderson, alluding to the common but cogent argument against a belief in Ghosts, "that only one man at a time ever saw a ghost, therefore, the probability is, that there never was such a thing," adds, in reference to the character of Hamlet, and to Shakspeare's management of his supernatural machinery, the following observations:—
 "From what I have related, it will be seen why it should happen, that only one at a time ever could see a ghost; and here we may lament, that our celebrated poet, whose knowledge of nature is every Englishman's boast, had not known such cases, and their causes as those I have related; he would not then, perhaps, have made his ghosts visible and audible on the stage. Every expression, every look in Macbeth and Hamlet, is perfectly natural and consistent with men so agitated, and quite sufficient to convince us of what they suffer, see, and hear; but it must be evident, that the disease being confined solely to the individual, such objects must be seen and heard only by the individual. That men so circumstanced as Macbeth or Hamlet, Brutus and Dion, should see phantoms and hold converse with them, appears to me perfectly natural; and, though the cases I have now related owe their origin entirely to a disordered state of bodily organs, as may be evidently inferred by the history of their rise, and the result

to convey it through the window was impossible, without removing part of the wall. Some hints were dropped, that the room had been subsequently haunted by the poor man's spirit.

"My friend laid his arms, properly prepared against intrusion of any kind, by the bedside, and retired to rest, not without some degree of apprehension. He was visited, in a dream, by a frightful apparition, and awaking in agony, found himself sitting up in bed, with a pistol grasped in his right hand. On casting a fearful glance round the room, he discovered, by the moon-light, a corpse, dressed in a shroud, reared erect, against the wall, close by the window. With much difficulty, he summoned up resolution to approach the dismal object, the features of which, and the minutest parts of its funeral apparel, he perceived distinctly. He passed one hand over it; felt nothing; and staggered back to the bed. After a long interval, and much reasoning with himself, he renewed his investigation, and at length discovered that the object of his terror was produced by the moon-beams, forming a long, bright image, through the broken window, on which his fancy, impressed by his dream, had pictured, with mischievous accuracy, the lineaments of a body prepared for interment. Powerful associations of terror, in this instance, had excited the recollected images with uncommon force and effect." Pp. 24—28.

of their cure, yet, with the knowledge we have of the effects of mind on the body, we may be fairly led to conclude, that great mental anxiety, inordinate ambition, and guilt may produce similar effects."*

If Shakspeare, more philosopher than poet, had pursued the plan which Dr. Alderson has recommended, he would have injured his tragedy, and wrecked his popularity. We could have spared, indeed, any ocular demonstration of the mute and blood-boulted ghost of Banquo in *Macbeth*, but had the ghost in *Hamlet* been invisible and inaudible, we should have lost the noblest scene of grateful terror which genius has ever created.

Nor was it ignorance on the part of Shakspeare which gave birth to the visibility of this awful spectre, for he has told us, in another place, that

"Such shadows are the weak brain's forgeries."†

and, even in the very play under consideration, he calls them "the very coinage of the brain," and adds, —

"This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in;"‡

but he well knew, that as a dramatic poet, in a superstitious age, it was requisite, in order to produce a strong and general impression, to adopt the popular creed, the superstition relative to his subject; and, as Mrs. Montagu has justly observed, "the poet who does so, understands his business much better than the critic, who, in judging of that work, refuses it his attention.—Thus every operation that develops the attributes, which vulgar opinion, or the nurse's legend, have taught us to ascribe to 'such a preternatural Being,' will augment our pleasure; whether we give the reins to our imagination, and, as

* Essay on Apparitions, annexed to the fourth edition of his Essay on the Rhus Toxicodendron, pp. 68, 69.

† Rape of Lucrece, vide Malone's Supplement, vol. i. p. 500.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 250, 251.

spectators, willingly yield ourselves up to pleasing delusion, or, as 'judicious' Critics, examine the merit of the composition." *

That an undoubting belief in the actual appearance of ghosts and apparitions was general in Shakspeare's time, has been the assertion of all who have alluded to the subject, either as contemporary or subsequent historians. Addison, at the commencement of the eighteenth century, speaking of the credulities of the two preceding centuries, observes, that "our Forefathers looked upon Nature with reverence and horror — that they loved to astonish themselves with the apprehensions of witchcraft, prodigies, charms, and enchantments. — There was not a village in England that had not a *ghost* in it — the churchyards were all *haunted* — every common had a circle of fairies belonging to it — and there was scarce a shepherd to be met with who had not seen a *spirit* †;" and Bourne, who wrote about the same period, and expressly on the subject of vulgar superstitions, tells us, that formerly "*hobgoblins* and *sprights* were in every *city*, and *town*, and *village*, by every *water*, and in every *wood*. — If a house was seated on some melancholy place, or built in some old romantic manner; or if any particular accident had happened in it, such as murder, sudden death, or the like, to be sure that house had a mark set on it, and was afterwards esteemed the habitation of a ghost. — Stories of this kind are infinite, and there are few *villages*, which have not either had such an house in it, or near it." ‡

Such, then, being the superstitious character of the poet's times, it was with great judgment that he seized the particulars best adapted to his purpose, moulding them with a skill so perfect, as to render the effect awful beyond all former precedent. A slight attention to the circumstances which accompany the first appearances of the spectre to Horatio and to Hamlet, will place this in a striking point of view.

* Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakspeare. 8vo. 5th edit. pp. 162. 165.

† Spectator, No. 419.

‡ Bourne's Antiquities of the Common People, 1725, edition apud Brand, pp. 119. 122, 123.

The solemnity with which this Royal phantom is introduced is beyond measure impressive: Bernardo is about to repeat to the incredulous Horatio what had occurred on the last apparition of the deceased monarch to Marcellus and himself, and thus commences his narrative: —

“ Last night of all,
When yon same star, that’s westward from the pole,
Had made his course to illumine that part of heaven
Where now it burns Marcellus, and myself,
The bell then beating one: —

- cf. Vol. I
Drake

This note of time, the traditionary hour for the appearance of a ghost, and, above all, the mysterious connection between the course of the star, and the visitation of the spirit, usher in the “dreaded sight” with an influence which makes the blood run chill. NB

A similar correspondence between a natural phenomenon in the heavens, and the agency of a disembodied spirit, occurs, with an effect which has been much admired, in a late poem by Lord Byron, where the shade of Francesca, addressing her apostate lover, and directing his attention to the orb of night, exclaims, —

“ There is a light cloud by the moon —
’Tis passing, and will pass full soon —
If, by the time its vapoury sail
Hath ceased her shaded orb to veil,
Thy heart within thee is not changed,
Then God and man are both avenged;
Dark will thy doom be, darker still
Thine immortality of ill.” *

The adjuration and interrogation of the ghost by Horatio and Hamlet, are conducted in conformity to the ceremonies of papal superstition; for it may be remarked, that in many things relative to religious observances, or to the preternatural as connected with religion, Shakspeare has shown such a marked predilection for the imposing

* The Siege of Corinth, p. 34.

exterior, and comprehensive creed of the Roman church, as to lead some of his biographers to suppose that he was himself a Roman Catholic. This adoption, however, is to be attributed to the poetical nature of the materials which the doctrines of Rome supply, and more particularly to the food for imagination which the supposition of an intermediate state, in which the souls of the departed are still connected with, and influenced by, the conduct of man, must necessarily create.

Such a system, it is evident, would very readily admit some of the oldest and most prevalent superstitions of the heathen world, and would give fresh credibility to the re-appearance of the dead, in order to reveal and to punish some horrible murder, to right the oppressed orphan and the widow, to enjoin the sepulture of the mangled corse, to discover concealed and ill-gotten treasure, to claim the aid of prayer and intercession, to announce the fate of kingdoms, &c. &c. Thus Horatio, addressing the Spectre, alludes to some of these as the probable causes of the dreadful visitation which appals him: —

“ Stay, illusion!

If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,

Speak to me!

If there be any good thing to be done,

That may to thee do ease, or grace to me,

Speak to me:

If thou art privy to thy country's fate,

Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,

O, speak!

Or, if thou hast uphoarded in thy life

Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,

For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,

Speak of it.” *

With a still higher degree of anxiety, curiosity, and terror, does Hamlet, as might naturally be expected, invoke the spirit of his father; his address being wrought up to the highest tone of amaze-

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 21.

ment and emotion, and clothed with the most vigorous expression of poetry : —

“ Angels and ministers of grace defend us !
 Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd,
 Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell,
 Be thy intents wicked, or charitable,
 Thou com'st in such a questionable shape,
 That I will speak to thee ; I'll call thee, Hamlet,
 King, father, royal Dane : O, answer me :
 Let me not burst in ignorance ! but tell,
 Why thy canoniz'd bones, hearsed in death,
 Have burst their cerements ! why the sepulchre,
 Wherein we saw thee quietly in-urn'd,
 Hath op'd his ponderous and marble jaws,
 To cast thee up again ! What may this mean,
 That thou, dead corse, again, in complete steel,
 Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
 Making night hideous ; and we fools of nature,
 So horribly to shake our disposition,
 With thoughts beyond the riches of our souls ?
 Say why is this ? wherefore ? what should we do ? ” *

The doubts and queries of this most impressive speech are similar to those which are allowed to be entertained, and directed to be put, by contemporary writers on the subject of apparitions. Thus the English Lavaterus enjoins the person so visited to charge the spirit to “ declare and open what he is—who he is, why he is come, and what he desireth ; ” saying,—“ Thou Spirite, we beseech thee by Christ Jesus, tell us what thou art ; ” and he then orders him to enquire, “ What man's soule he is ? for what cause he is come, and what he doth desire ? Whether he require any ayde by prayers and suffrages ? Whether by massing or almes giving he may be released ? ” &c. &c. †

In pursuance of the same judicious plan of adopting the popular conceptions, and giving them dignity and effect, by that philosophy

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 70—74. Act i. sc. 4.

† “ Of ghostes and spirites walking by nyght,” Parte the Seconde, pp. 106, 107. 4to. B. L., 1572. From the chapter entitled, “ The Papistes doctrine touching the soules of dead men, and the appearing of them.”

how to
address
a spirit
B

of the supernatural which has been remarked as so peculiarly the gift of Shakspeare*, we find him employing, in these scenes of superhuman interference, the traditional notions of his age, relative to the influence of approaching light on departed spirits, as intimated by the crowing of the cock, and the fading lustre of the glow-worm. One of the passages which have so admirably immortalised these superstitions, contains also another not less striking, concerning the supposed sanctity and protecting power of the nights immediately previous to Christmas-Day. On the sudden departure of the Spirit, Bernardo remarks, —

“ It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

Hor. And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard,
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day, and, at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
The extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine: and of the truth herein
This present object made probation.

Mar. It faded on the crowing of the cock.
Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.” †

“ ————— Fare thee well at once!”

exclaims the apparition on retiring from the presence of his son,

“ The glow-worm shows the matins to be near,
And gins to pale his uneffectual fire.” ‡

* Madame De Stael observes, “ there is always something philosophical in the supernatural employed by Shakspeare.” *The Influence of Literature on Society*, vol. i. p. 297.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xviii. pp. 22—25. Act i. sc. 1.

‡ Ibid. pp. 86, 87. Act i. sc. 5.

This idea of spirits flying the approach of morning, appears from the hymn of *Prudentius*, quoted by Bourne, to have been entertained by the Christian world as early as the commencement of the fourth century*; but a passage still more closely allied to the lines in Shakspeare, has been adduced by Mr. Douce, from a hymn composed by Saint Ambrose, and formerly used in the Salisbury service.—“It so much resembles,” he observes, “Horatio’s speech, that one might almost suppose Shakspeare had seen them:—

“ *Preco diei jam sonat,
Noctis profundæ pervigil;
Nocturna lux vianibus,
A nocte noctem segregans.
Hoc excitatus Lucifer,
Solvit polum caligine;
Hoc omnis errorum chorus
Viam nocendi deserit.
Gallo canente spes redit, &c.*” †

“The epithets *extravagant* and *erring*,” he adds, “are highly poetical and appropriate, and seem to prove that Shakspeare was not altogether ignorant of the Latin language.” ‡

With what awful and mysterious grandeur has he invested the Popish doctrine of purgatory! a doctrine certainly well calculated for poetical purposes, and of which the particulars must have been familiar to him, through the writings of his contemporaries. Thus the English Lavaterus, detailing the opinions of the Roman Catholics on this subject, tells us, that “Purgatorie is also under the earth as Hell is. Some say that Hell and Purgatorie are both one place, albeit the paines be divers according to the deserts of soules. Furthermore

* *Antiquitates Vulgares* apud Brand, p. 68.—It has been observed by Mr. Steevens, that “this is a very ancient superstition. Philostratus, giving an account of the apparition of Achilles’ shade to Apollonius Tyaneus, says that it vanished with a little glimmer as soon as the cock crowed.” Vit. Apol. iv. 16. Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xviii. p. 25. note.

† “See *Expositio hymnorum secundum usum Sarum*, pr. by R. Pynson, n. d., 4to. fol. vij. b.”

‡ *Illustrations of Shakspeare*, vol. ii. p. 201.

they say, that under the earth there are more places of punishment in which the soules of the dead may be purged. For they say, that this or that soule hath ben seene in this or that mountaine, flood, or valley, where it hath committed the offence : that there are particuler Purgatories, assigned unto them for some special cause, before the day of Judgement, after which time all maner of Purgatories, as well general as particuler shal cease. Some of them say, that the paine of Purgatorie is al one with the punishment of Hel, and that they differ only in this, that the one hath an end, the other no ende : and that it is far more easie to endure all the paynes of this worlde, which al men since Adam's time have susteined, even unto the day of the last Judgement, than to bear one dayes space the least of those two punishments. Further they holde that our fire, if it be compared with the fire of Purgatorie, doth resemble only a painted fire." *

From this temporary place of torment, he informs us, that, "by Gods licence and dispensation, certaine, yea before the day of Judgement, are permitted to come out, and that not for ever, but only for a season, for the instructing and terrifying of the lyving:"—and again :—"Many times in the nyght season, there have beene certaine spirits hearde softly going——who being asked what they were, have made aunswere that they were the soules of this or that man, and that they nowe endure extreame tormentes. If by chaunce any man did aske of them, by what meanes they might be delivered out of those tortures, they have aunswered, that in case a certaine numbred of Masses were sung for them, or Pilgrimages vowed to some Saintes, or some other such like deedes doone for their sake, that then surely they shoulde be delivered." †

Never was the art of the poet more discoverable, than in the use which has been made of this doctrine in the play before us, and more

* "Of ghostes and spirites walking by nyght," 1572. The seconde parte, chap. ii. p. 103.

† The seconde parte, chap. ii. p. 104.; and The first parte, chap. xv. p. 72.

particularly in the following narrative, which instantly seizes on the mind, and fills it with that indefinite kind of terror that leads to the most horrible imaginings:—

“ *Ghost.* My hour is almost come,
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.
Ham. Alas, poor ghost! —
Ghost. I am thy father’s spirit;
Doom’d for a certain term to walk the night;
And, for the day, confin’d to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes, done in my days of nature,
Are burnt and purg’d away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul; freeze thy young blood;
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres;
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine:
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood.” *

In this hazardous experiment, of placing before our eyes a spirit from the world of departed souls, no one has approached, by many degrees, the excellence of our poet. The shade of Darius, in the Persians of Æschylus, has been satisfactorily shown, by a critic of great ability, to be far inferior †; nor can the ghosts of Ossian, who is justly admired for delineations of this kind, be brought into competition with the Danish spectre; neither the Grecian, nor the Celtic mythology, indeed, affording materials equal, in point of impression, to those which existed for the English bard. We may also venture to affirm, that the management of Shakspeare, in the disposition of his materials, from the first shock which the sentinels receive, to that which Hamlet sustains in the closet of his mother, is perfectly unrivalled, and, more than any other, calculated to excite the highest degree of interest, pity, and terror.

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xviii. pp. 77—80. Act i. sc. 5.

† See Montagu on the Preternatural Beings of Shakspeare, in her Essay, p. 160. 165.

It is likewise no small proof of judgment in our poet, that he has only *once* attempted to unveil, in this direct manner, the awful destiny of the dead, and to embody, as it were, at full length, a missionary from the grave; for the ghost of *Banquo*, and the spectral appearances in *Julius Cæsar* and *Richard the Third*, are slight and powerless sketches, when compared with the tremendous visitation in *Hamlet*, beyond which no human imagination can ever hope to pass.*

* It has been asserted by Gildon, but upon what foundation does not appear, that Shakspeare wrote the scene of the Ghost in Hamlet, in the church-yard bordering on his house at Stratford. — Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 4.

CHAPTER XI.

OBSERVATIONS, ON *KING JOHN*; ON *ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL*; ON *KING HENRY THE FIFTH*; ON *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING*; ON *AS YOU LIKE IT*; ON *MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR*; ON *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA*; ON *HENRY THE EIGHTH*; ON *TIMON OF ATHENS*; ON *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*; ON *KING LEAR*; ON *CYMBELINE*; ON *MACBETH*. — DISSERTATION ON THE POPULAR BELIEF IN WITCHCRAFT DURING THE AGE OF SHAKSPEARE, AND ON HIS MANAGEMENT OF THIS SUPERSTITION IN THE TRAGEDY OF *MACBETH*.

WE are well aware, that, to many of our readers, the chronological discussion incident to a new arrangement, will be lamented as tedious and uninteresting; the more so, as nothing absolutely certain can be expected as the result. That this part of our subject, therefore, may be as compressed as possible, we shall, in future, be very brief in offering a determination between the decisions of the two previous chronologers, reserving a somewhat larger space for the few instances in which it may be thought necessary to deviate from both.

Of the plays enumerated by Meres, in September, 1598, only two remain to be noticed in this portion of our work, namely, *King John* and *Love's Labour's Wonne*: —

16. *KING JOHN*: 1598. Mr. Chalmers having detected some allusions in this play to the events of 1597, in addition to those which Mr. Malone had accurately referred to the preceding year, it becomes necessary, with the former of these gentlemen, to assign its production to the spring of 1598. *

If *King John*, as a whole, be not entitled to class among the very first rate compositions of our author, it can yet exhibit some scenes of superlative beauty and effect, and two characters supported with unflinching energy and consistency.

* Chalmers's Supplemental Apology, p. 357.

The bastard Faulconbridge, though not perhaps a very amiable personage, being somewhat too interested and worldly-minded in his conduct to excite much of our esteem, has, notwithstanding, so large a portion of *the very spirit of Plantagenet* in him, so much heroism, gaiety, and fire in his constitution, and, in spite of his vowed accommodation to the times *, such an open and undaunted turn of mind, that we cannot refuse him our admiration, nor, on account of his fidelity to John, however ill-deserved, our occasional sympathy and attachment. The alacrity and intrepidity of his daring spirit are nobly supported to the very last, where we find him exerting every nerve to rouse and animate the conscience-stricken soul of the tyrant.

In the person of Lady Constance, *Maternal Grief*, the most interesting passion of the play, is developed in all its strength; the picture penetrates to the inmost heart, and seared must those feelings be, which can withstand so powerful an appeal; for all the emotions of the fondest affection, and the wildest despair, all the rapid transitions of anguish, and approximating phrenzy, are wrought up into the scene with a truth of conception which rivals that of nature herself.

The innocent and beauteous Arthur, rendered doubly attractive by the sweetness of his disposition and the severity of his fate, is thus described by his doating mother: —

“ But thou art fair, and at thy birth, dear boy !
Nature and fortune join'd to make thee great ;
Of Nature's gifts thou may'st with lillies boast,
And with the half-blown rose.” †

When he is captured, therefore, and imprisoned by John, and, consequently, sealed for destruction, who but Shakspeare could have done justice to the agonising sorrows of the parent ? Her invocation

* Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. x. p. 362.

“ For he is but a bastard to the time,
That doth not smack of observation,” &c.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. x. p. 413. Act iii. sc. 1.

to death, and her address to Pandulph, paint maternal despair with a force which no imagination can augment, and of which the tenderness and pathos have never been exceeded : —

“ Death, death : — O amiable lovely death ! —
Come, grin on me ; and I will think thou smil’st, —
———— Misery’s love,
O, come to me ! —

—— Father cardinal, I have heard you say,
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven :
If that be true I shall see my boy again ;
For, since the birth of Cain, the first male child,
To him that did but yesterday suspire,
There was not such a gracious creature born.
But now will canker sorrow eat my bud,
And chase the native beauty from his cheek,
And he will look as hollow as a ghost ;
As dim and meagre as an ague’s fit ;
And so he’ll die ; and, rising so again,
When I shall meet him in the court of heaven
I shall not know him : therefore never, never
Must I behold my pretty Arthur more.

Pand. You hold too heinous a respect of grief.

Const. He talks to me, that never had a son.

K. Phi. You are as fond of grief, as of your child,

Const. Grief fills the room up of my absent child.

Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me ;

Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,

Remembers me of all his gracious parts,

Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form ;

Then, have I reason to be fond of grief ?

Fare you well : had you such a loss as I,

I could give better comfort than you do. —

I will not keep this form upon my head, (Tearing off her head-dress.

When there is such disorder in my wit.

O lord ! my boy, my Arthur, my fair son !

My life, my joy, my food, my all the world !

My widow-comfort, and my sorrow’s cure ! ” *

[Exit.

Independent of the scenes which unfold the striking characters of Constance and Faulconbridge, there are two others in this play which

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. x. pp. 451. 454—456. Act iii. sc. 4.

may vie with any thing that Shakspeare has produced ; namely, the scene between John and Hubert, and that between Hubert and Arthur. The former, where the usurper obscurely intimates to Hubert his bloody wishes, is conducted in so masterly a manner, that we behold the dark and turbulent soul of John lying naked before us in all its deformity, and shrinking with fear even from the enunciation of its own vile purpose ; “ it is one of the scenes,” as Mr. Steevens has well observed, “ to which may be promised a lasting commendation. Art could add little to its perfection ; and time itself can take nothing from its beauties.” *

The scene with Hubert and the executioners, where the hapless Arthur supplicates for mercy, almost lacerates the heart itself ; and is only rendered supportable by the tender and alleviating impression which the sweet innocence and artless eloquence of the poor child fix with indelible influence on the mind. Well may it be said, in the language of our poet, that he who can behold this scene without the gushing tribute of a tear,

“ Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils ; —
Let no such man be trusted.”

As for the character of John, which, from its meanness and imbecillity, seems not well calculated for dramatic representation, Shakspeare has contrived, towards the close of the drama, to excite in his behalf some degree of interest and commiseration ; especially in the dying scene, where the fallen monarch, in answer to the enquiry of his son as to the state of his feelings, mournfully exclaims, —

“ Poison’d, — ill fare ; — dead, forsook, cast off.”

17. *ALL’S WELL THAT ENDS WELL*: 1598. There does not appear any sufficient reason for altering the date assigned to this play by Mr. Malone, whom we have, therefore, followed in preference to Mr. Chalmers, who has fixed on the succeeding year ; a decision to

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. x. p. 447. note 9.

which we have been particularly induced, independent of other circumstances, by the apparent notice of this drama by Meres, under the title of *Love's Labour's Wonne*, an appellation which very accurately applies to this, but to no other of our author's productions with any similar degree of pertinency. We have reason, therefore, to conclude, as nothing has hitherto been brought forward to invalidate the assumption, that Meres's title was the original designation of this comedy, and was intended by the poet as a counter-title to *Love's Labour's Lost*. What induced him to dismiss the first, and to adopt the present proverbial appellation, cannot positively be ascertained; but the probability is, as Mr. Malone has remarked, that the alteration was suggested in consequence of the adage itself being found in the body of the play. *

The noblest character in this comedy, which, though founded on a story somewhat too improbable, abounds both in interest and entertainment, is the good old *Countess of Rousillon*. Shakspeare seems to have drawn this portrait *con amore*, and we figure to ourselves for this amiable woman, a countenance beaming with dignity, sweetness, and sensibility, emanations from a heart which had ever responded to the impulses of love and charity. In short, her maternal affection for the gentle Helen, her piety, sound sense, and candour, call for our warmest reverence and esteem, which accompany her to the close of the representation, and follow her departure with regret. †

Helen, the romantic, the love-dejected Helen, must excite in every feeling bosom a high degree of sympathy; patient suffering in the female sex, especially when resulting from ill-requited attachment, and united with modesty and beauty, cannot but be an object of interest and commiseration, and, in the instance before us, these are admirably blended in

"a maid too virtuous
For the contempt of empire,

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 290.

† "Of all the characters of Shakspeare," remarks Mr. Felton, "none more resemble his best female advocate (Mrs. Montagu) than the Countess of Rousillon." — Imperfect Hints, part i. p. 65.

but who, unfortunately, has to struggle against the prejudices of birth, rank, and unfeeling pride, in the very man who is the object of her idolatry, and who, even after the most sacred of bonds should have cemented their destiny, flies with scorn from her embraces.

If in the infancy of her passion the error of indiscretion be attributable to Helen, how is it atoned for by the most engaging humility, by the most bewitching tenderness of heart: "Be not offended," she tells her noble patroness,

"Be not offended; for it hurts not him,
That he is lov'd of me: I follow him not
By any token of presumptuous suit;
Nor would I have him, till I do deserve him;
Yet never know how that desert should be —
———— thus, Indian-like,
Religious in mine error, I adore
The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,
But knows of him no more." *

But when the wife of Bertram, with a resignation and self-devotedness worthy of the highest praise, she deserts the house of her mother-in-law, knowing that whilst she is sheltered there her husband will not return, how does she, becoming thus an unprotected wanderer, a pilgrim *bare-foot plodding the cold ground* for him who has contemned her, rise to the tone of exalted truth and heroism!

—————"Poor lord! is't I
That chase thee from thy country, and expose
Those tender limbs of thine to the event
Of the none-sparing war? and is it I
That drive thee from the sportive court, where thou
Wast shot at with fair eyes, to be the mark
Of smoky muskets? —
———— No, come thou home, Rousillon: —
———— I will be gone:
My being it is, that holds thee hence:
Shall I stay here to do't? no, no, although
The air of paradise did fan the house,

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. viii. pp. 248, 249. Act i. sc. 3.

And angels offic'd all: I will be gone;
 That pitiful rumour may report my flight,
 To console thine ear. Come, night, —
 For, with the dark, poor thief, I'll steal away." *

It was necessary, in order to place the character of Helen in its most interesting point of view, that Bertram should be represented as arrogant, profligate, and unfeeling; a coxcomb who to family-consequence hesitates not to sacrifice all that is manly, just, and honourable. The picture is but too true to nature, and, since the poet found such a delineation essential to the construction of his story, he has very properly taken care, though Bertram, out of tenderness to the Countess and Helena, meets not the punishment he merits, that nothing in mitigation of his folly should be produced.

To the comic portion of this drama too much praise can scarcely be given; it is singularly rich in all that characterises the wit, the drollery, and the humour of Shakspeare. The Clown is the rival of Touchstone in *As You Like It*; and Parolles, in the power of exciting laughter and ludicrous enjoyment, is only secondary to Falstaff.

18. KING HENRY THE FIFTH: 1599. The chorus at the commencement of the fifth act, and the silence of Meres, too plainly point out the era of the composition of this play, to admit of any alteration depending on the bare supposition of subsequent interpolation, or on allusions too vague and general to afford any specific application.

No character has been pourtrayed more at length by our poet than that of Henry the Fifth, for we trace him acting a prominent part through three plays. In *Henry the Fourth*, until the battle of Shrewsbury, we behold him in all the effervescence of his mad-cap revelry; occasionally, it is true, affording us glimpses of the native mightiness of his mind, but first bursting upon us with heroic splendour on that celebrated field. In every situation, however, he is evidently the

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. viii. pp. 313. 315. Act iii. sc. 2.

darling offspring of his bard, whether we attend him to the frolic orgies in Eastcheap, to his combat with the never-daunted Percy, or, as in the play before us, to the immortal plains of Agincourt.

The fire and animation which inform the soul of Henry when he rushes to arms in defence of his father's throne, are supported with unwearied vigour, with a blaze which never falters, throughout the whole of his martial achievements in France. Nor has Shakspeare been content with representing him merely in the light of a noble and chivalrous hero, he has endowed him with every regal virtue; he is magnanimous, eloquent, pious, and sincere; versed in all the arts of government, policy, and war; a lover of his country and of his people, and a strenuous protector of their liberties and rights.

Of the various instances which our author has brought forward for the exemplification of these virtues and acquirements, it may be necessary to notice two or three. Thus the detection of the treason of Cambridge, Gray, and Scroop, who had conspired to assassinate Henry previous to his embarkation, exhibits a rich display of the mental greatness and emphatic oratory of this warlike monarch. After reprobating the treachery of Cambridge and Gray, he suddenly turns upon Scroop, who had been his bosom-friend, with the following pathetic and soul-harrowing appeal:—

“ But

What shall I say to thee, lord Scroop! —
 Thou, that didst bear the key of all my counsels,
 That knew'st the very bottom of my soul! —
 May it be possible, that foreign hire
 Could out of thee extract one spark of evil,
 That might annoy my finger? —
 O, how hast thou with jealousy infected
 The sweetness of affiance! —

I will weep for thee;
 For this revolt of thine, methinks, is like
 Another fall of man.” *

Nor can we forbear distinguishing the dismissal of these traitors, as

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xii. pp. 336. 338, 339. Act ii. sc. 2.

a striking example of magnanimity, and of justice tempered with dignified compassion : —

“ God quit you in his mercy ! —
 Touching our person, seek we no revenge;
 But we our kingdom’s safety must so tender,
 Whose ruin you three sought, that to her laws
 We do deliver you. Get you therefore hence,
 Poor miserable wretches, to your death:
 The taste whereof, God, of his mercy, give you
 Patience to endure, and true repentance
 Of all your dear offences !” *

In the fourth act, what a masterly picture of the cares and solitudes of royalty is drawn by Henry himself, in his noble soliloquy on the morning of the battle, especially towards the close, where he contrasts the gorgeous but painful ceremonies of a crown with the profitable labour and the balmy rest of the peasant, who

————— “ from the rise to set,
 Sweats in the eye of Phœbus, and all night
 Sleeps in Elysium !”

But the prayer which immediately follows is unrivalled for its power of impression, presenting us with the most lively idea of the amiability, piety, and devotional fervour of the monarch : —

“ O God of battles ! steel my soldiers’ hearts !
 ————— Not to-day, O Lord,
 O not to-day, think not upon the fault
 My father made in compassing the crown !
 I Richard’s body have interred anew ;
 And on it have bestow’d more contrite tears,
 Than from it issued forced drops of blood.
 Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,
 Who twice a day their *wither’d* hands hold up
 Toward heaven, to pardon blood ; and I have built
 Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests
 Sing still for Richard’s soul.” †

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xii. pp. 341, 342. Act ii. sc. 2.

† Ibid. vol. xii. pp. 438—441. Act iv. sc. 1.

Of the *picturesque* force of an epithet, there is not in the records of poetry a more remarkable instance than what is here produced by the adoption of the term *withered*, through which the scene starts into existence with a boldness of relief that vies with the noblest creations of the pencil.

The address to Westmoreland, on his wishing for more men from England, is a fine specimen of military eloquence, possessing that high tone of enthusiasm and exhilaration, so well calculated to inflame the daring spirit of the soldier. It is in perfect keeping with the historical character of Henry, nor can we agree with Dr. Johnson in thinking that its reduction "to about half the number of lines," would have added, either to its force or weight of sentiment*; so far, indeed, are we from coalescing with this decision, that we feel convinced not a clause could be withdrawn without material injury to the animation and effect of the whole.

Instances of the same impressive and energising powers of elocution, will be found in the King's exhortation to his soldiers before the gates of Harfleur†; in his description of the horrors attendant on a city taken by storm‡; and in his replies to the Herald Montjoy§; all of which spring naturally from, and are respectively adapted to the circumstances of the scene.

Nor, amid all the dangers and unparalleled achievements of the Fifth Henry, do we altogether lose sight of the frank and easy gaiety which distinguished the Prince of Wales. His winning condescension in sympathising with the cares and pleasures of his soldiers, display the same kindness and affability of temper, the same love of raillery and humour, reminiscences, as it were, of his youthful days, and which, in his intercourse with Williams and Fluellin, produce the most pleasing and grateful relief.

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xii. p. 456. note 5.

† Ibid. p. 366. et seq. Act iii. sc. 1.

‡ Ibid. p. 378. Act iii. sc. 3.

§ Ibid. p. 404. et seq. 459. et seq.

These touches of a frolic pencil are managed with such art and address, that they derogate nothing from the dignity of the monarch and the conqueror ; what may be termed the truly comic portion of the play, being carried on apart from any immediate connection with the person of the sovereign.

As the events of warfare and the victories of Henry form the sole subjects of the serious parts of this piece, it was necessary for the sake of variety and dramatic effect, and in order to satisfy the audience of this age, that comic characters and incidents should be interspersed ; and, though we are disappointed in not seeing Falstaff, according to the poet's promise, again on the scene, we once more behold his associates, Bardolph, Pistol, and Hostess Quickly, pursuing their pleasant career with unfailing eccentricity and humour. The description of the death of Falstaff by the last of this fantastic trio, is executed with peculiar felicity, for while it excites a smile verging on risibility, it calls forth, at the same time, a sigh of pity and regret.

Of the general conduct of this play, it may be remarked, that the interest turns altogether upon the circumstances which accompany a single battle ; consequently the poet has put forth all his strength in colouring and contrasting the situation of the two armies ; and so admirably has he succeeded in this attempt, by opposing the full assurance of victory, on the part of the French, their boastful clamour, and impatient levity, to the conscious danger, calm valour, and self-devotedness of the English, that we wait the issue of the combat with an almost breathless anxiety.

And, in order that the heroism of Henry might not want any decoration which poetry could afford, the epic and lyric departments have been laid under contribution, for the purpose of supplying what the very confined limits of the stage, then in the infancy of its mechanism, had no means of unfolding. A preliminary chorus, therefore, is attached to each act, impressing vividly on the imagination what could not be addressed to the senses, and adding to a

subject, in itself more epic than dramatic, all the requisite grandeur and sublimity of description.

19. MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING: 1599. The allusion, in the opening scene of this comedy, to a circumstance attending the campaign of the Earl of Essex in Ireland, during the summer of 1599, which was first noticed by Mr. Chalmers, and which seems corroborated by the testimony of Camden and Moryson*, has induced us to adopt the chronology dependent on this apparent reference, the only note of time, indeed, which has hitherto been discovered in the play.

This very popular production which appears to have originally had the title of *Benedick and Beatrice* †, and is, in its leading incidents, to be traced to one of the tales of Bandello ‡, possesses, both with respect to its fable and characters, a vivacity, richness, and variety, together with a happiness of combination, which delight as much as they astonish.

The two plots are managed with uncommon skill; the first, involving the temporary disgrace and the recognition of Hero, includes a vast range of emotions, and abounds both in pathos and humour. The accusation of the innocent Hero by the man whom she loved, and at the very moment too, when she was about to be united to him for life, excites a most powerful impression; but is surpassed by the scene which restores her to happiness, where Claudio, supposing himself about to be united, in obedience to the will of Leonato, to a relation of his former beloved, and, as he concludes, deceased mistress, on unveiling the bride, beholds the features of her whom he had injured, and whom he had lamented as no more.

It is no small proof of the ingenuity of our poet, that through the means by which the iniquity practised against Hero is developed,

* Supplemental Apology, p. 381.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vi. p. 185.

‡ It is most probable that Shakspeare derived his materials from a version of Belleforest, who copied Bandello. The story forms the 22d tale of the first part of Bandello, and the 18th history of the 3d volume of Belleforest.

we are furnished with a fund of the most ludicrous entertainment; the charge of Dogberry to the Watch, and the arrest and examination of Conrade and Borachio, throwing all the muscles of risibility into action.

Nor is the second plot in any respect inferior to the first; indeed, there is reason to believe, that, to the masterly delineations of Benedick and Beatrice, "the most sprightly characters that Shakspeare ever drew," and to their mutual entrapment in the meshes of love, a great part of the popularity which has ever accompanied this comedy, is in justice to be ascribed. Fault, however, has been found with the mode by which the reciprocal affection of these sworn foes to love has been secured: "the second contrivance," observes Mr. Steevens, "is less ingenious than the first:—or, to speak more plainly, the same incident is become stale by repetition. I wish some other method had been found to entrap Beatrice, than that very one which before had been successfully practised on Benedick *;" an objection which has been censured with some severity by Schlegel, who justly remarks, that the drollery of this twice-used artifice "lies in the very symmetry of the deception."† It may be added, that the conversation of the gentleman and the wit, in Shakspeare's days, may be pretty well ascertained from the part of Benedick in this play, and from that of Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*; both presenting us, after some allowance for a licence of allusion too broad for the decorum of the present day, with a favourable picture of the accomplishments of polished society in the reign of Elizabeth.

20. AS YOU LIKE IT: 1600. Though this play, with the exception of the disguise and self-discovery of Rosalind, may be said to be destitute of plot, it is yet one of the most delightful of the dramas of Shakspeare. There is something inexpressibly wild and interesting both in the characters and in the scenery; the former disclosing the moral discipline and the sweets of adversity, the purest emotions

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vi. p. 182.

† Schlegel on Dramatic Literature, vol. ii. p. 166.

of love and friendship, of gratitude and fidelity, the melancholy of genius, and the exhilaration of innocent mirth, as opposed to the desolating effects of malice, envy, and ambition; and the latter unfolding, with the richest glow of fancy, landscapes to which, as objects of imitation, the united talents of Ruysdale, Claude, and Salvator Rosa, could alone do justice.

From the forest of Arden, from that wild wood of oaks,

“ whose boughs were moss'd with age,
And high tops bald with dry antiquity,”

from the bosom of sequestered glens and pathless solitudes, has the poet called forth lessons of the most touching and consolatory wisdom. Airs from paradise seem to fan with refreshing gales, with a soothing consonance of sound, the interminable depth of foliage, and to breathe into the hearts of those who have sought its shelter from the world, an oblivion of their sorrows and their cares. The banished Duke, the much-injured Orlando, and the melancholy Jaques, lose in meditation on the scenes which surround them, or in sportive freedom, or in grateful occupation, all corrosive sense of past affliction. Love seems the only passion which has penetrated this romantic seclusion, and the sigh of philosophic pity, or of wounded sensibility, (the legacy of a deserted world,) the only relique of the storm which is passed and gone.

Nothing, in fact, can blend more harmoniously with the romantic glades, and magic windings of Arden, than the society which Shakespeare has placed beneath its shades. The effect of such scenery, on the lover of nature, is to take full possession of the soul, to absorb its very faculties, and, through the charmed imagination, to convert the workings of the mind into the sweetest sensations of the heart, into the joy of grief, into a thankful endurance of adversity, into the interchange of the tenderest affections; and find we not here, in the person of the Duke, the noblest philosophy of resignation; in Jaques, the humorous sadness of an amiable misanthropy; in Orlando, the mild dejection of self-accusing humility; in Rosalind and

Celia, the purity of sisterly affection, whilst love in all its innocence and gaiety binds in delicious fetters, not only the younger exiles, but the pastoral natives of the forest. A day thus spent, in all the careless freedom of unsophisticated nature, seems worth an eternity of common-place existence !

The nice discrimination of Shakspeare and his profound knowledge of human nature are no where more apparent than in sketching the character of Jaques, whose social and confiding affections, originally warm and enthusiastic, and which had led him into all the excesses and credulities of thoughtless attachment, being blighted by the desertion of those on whom he had fondly relied, have suddenly subsided into a delicately blended compound of melancholy, misanthropy, and morbid sensibility, mingled with a large portion of benevolent though sarcastic humour. The selfishness and ingratitude of mankind are, consequently, the theme of all his meditations, and even tinge his recreations with the same pensive hue of moral invective. We accordingly first recognise him in a situation admirably adapted to the nurture of his peculiar feelings, laid at length

“ Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out
Upon the brook that brawls along the wood,”

and assimilating the fate of an unfortunate stag, who had been wounded by the hunters, and who

“ Stood on the extremest verge of the swift brook,
Augmenting it with tears,”

to the too common lot of humanity :—

“ *Duke.* But what said Jaques?
Did he not moralize this spectacle?

Lord. O yes, into a thousand similes.
First, for his weeping in the needless stream;
Poor deer, quoth he, *thou mak'st a testament*
As worldings do, giving the sum of more
To that which had too much. Then, being there alone,
Left and abandoned of his velvet friends;
'Tis right, quoth he; *thus misery doth part*

The flux of company. Anon, a careless herd,
 Full of the pasture, jumps along by him,
 And never stays to greet him. *Ay*, quoth Jaques,
Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens ;
'Tis just the fashion : wherefore do you look
*Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there ?" **

As might be imagined, music, the food of melancholy as well as of love, is the chief consolation of Jaques ; he tells Amiens, who, on finishing a song, had objected to his request of singing again, that it would make him melancholy. " I thank it. More, I pr'ythee more. I can suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs : More, I pr'ythee, more † ;" and we can well conceive with what exquisite pleasure he listened to the subsequent song of the same nobleman :

" Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
 Thou art not so unkind
 As man's ingratitude ;
 Thy tooth is not so keen,
 Because thou art not seen,
 Although thy breath be rude. —
 Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
 Thou dost not bite so nigh
 As benefits forgot ;
 Though thou the waters warp,
 Thy sting is not so sharp
 As friend remember'd not." ‡

From this interesting and finely shaded character, the result of a false estimate of what is to be expected from human nature and society, much valuable instruction may be derived ; but as a similar delineation will soon occur in the person of Timon, we shall defer what may be required upon this subject to a subsequent page.

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. viii. pp. 43, 44. Act ii. sc. 1.

† Ibid. p. 59. Act ii. sc. 5.

‡ Ibid. p. 76, 77. Act ii. sc. 7.

21. MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR: 1601. It does not appear to us that Mr. Chalmers has succeeded in his endeavours to set aside the general tradition relative to this comedy, as recorded by Mr. Rowe, who says, that Queen Elizabeth "was so well pleased with the admirable character of Falstaff in *The Two Parts of Henry the Fourth*, that she commanded Shakspeare to continue it for one play more, and to show him in love." * Rowe adopted this from Dennis, who mentions it as the tradition of his time; and has also related, that being "eager to see it acted," she ordered it "to be finished in *fourteen days* †," and was highly gratified by the representation.

A tradition of the seventeenth century thus general in its diffusion, and particular in its circumstances, cannot, and ought not, to be shaken by the mere observations that "she (the Queen) was certainly too feeble in 1601 to think of such toys," and that at this time "she was in no proper mood for such fooleries ‡;" more especially when we recollect, that at this very period, she was guilty of fooleries greatly more extravagant and out of character, than that of commanding a play to be written. At a "mask at Blackfriars, on the marriage of Lord Herbert and Mrs. Russel," relates Lord Orford, on the authority of the Bacon Papers, "eight lady maskers chose eight more to dance the measures. Mrs. Fritton, who led them, went to the Queen, and wooed her to dance. Her Majesty asked, what she was? 'AFFECTION,' she said. 'AFFECTION!' said the Queen;—'AFFECTION is false.'—Yet her majesty rose and *danced*.—She was then SIXTY-EIGHT! §" If, at the age of SIXTY-EIGHT, she was not *too feeble to dance*, nor *too wise to fancy herself in love*, we may easily conceive, that she had both *strength* and *inclination* to attend and to enjoy a play!

Another objection of the same critic to the probability of this tradition, turns upon the extraordinary assumption, that it was not within

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 66.

† Epistle Dedicatory to *The Comical Gallant*, 1702.

‡ Supplemental Apology, pp. 320. 345.

§ Royal and Noble Authors, apud Park, vol. i. p. 82.

the omnipotence of Elizabeth “to bring Falstaff to *real life*, after being *positively as dead as nail in door* *;” as if Falstaff had ever possessed a *real* existence, and the Queen had been expected to have occasioned his *bodily* resurrection from the dead. In accordance with this supposed impossibility, impossible only in this strange point of view, we are further told, that “whatever a capricious Queen might have wished to have seen, the audience would not have borne to see the *dead* knight on the *living* stage;” thus again confounding the *dramatic* death of an *imaginary* being, with the physical dissolution incident to material nature! Surely Shakspeare had an unlimited control over the creatures of his own imagination, and had he reproduced the fat knight in half-a-dozen plays, after the death which he had already assigned him in *Henry the Fifth*, who, provided he had supported the merit and consistency of the character, would have charged him with a violation of probability? When Addison killed Sir Roger de Coverley, in order, as tradition says, to prevent any one interfering with the unity of his sketch, he could only be certain of the non-resumption of his imaginary existence in the very work which had detailed his decease; for if Addison himself, or any of his contemporaries, had reproduced Sir Roger, in a subsequent periodical paper, with the same degree of skill which had accompanied the first delineation, would it have been objected as a sufficient condemnation of such a performance, that the knight had been previously dispatched?

We see no reason, therefore, for distrusting the generally received tradition, and have, accordingly, placed the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, with Mr. Malone, after the three plays devoted to *Henry the Fourth*, and *Fifth*.

In this very entertaining drama, which unfolds a vast display of incident, and a remarkable number of well-supported characters, we are presented with an almost unrivalled instance of pure domestic comedy, and which furnishes a rich draught of English minds and

* Supplemental Apology, p. 345.

manners, in the middle ranks of society, during one of the most interesting periods of our annals.

Shakspeare has here achieved, perhaps, the most difficult task which can fall to the lot of any writer; that of resuscitating a favourite and highly-wrought child of the imagination, and, with a success equal to that which attended the original production, re-involving him in a series of fresh adventures. Falstaff has not lost, in this comedy, any portion of his former power of pleasing; he returns to us in the fulness of his strength, and we immediately enter, with unabated avidity and relish, into a further developement of his inexhaustible stores of humour, wit, and drollery.

The self-delusion of Sir John, who conceives himself to be an object of love, and the incongruities, absurdities, and intrigues, into which this monstrous piece of vanity plunges him, form, together with the secondary plot of Fenton and Anne Page, the richest tissue of incident and stratagem that ever graced a stage. The mode, also, in which the two intrigues are interwoven, the happy termination of the second, arising out of the contrivance which brings about the issue of the first, has a just claim to praise both for its invention and execution.

To the comic characters which had formerly been associated with the exploits of the Knight, and which, as accessories or retainers, accompany him in this play, some very laughable and grotesque additions are to be found in the persons of *Slender*, *Sir Hugh Evans*, and *Dr. Caius*, who are deeply implicated in the fable, and who, by the most ludicrous exhibitions of rustic simplicity, provincial accent, and broken English, contribute in a high degree to the variety and hilarity of the scene.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA: 1601. That this play was written and acted before the decease of Queen Elizabeth, is evident from the manner in which it is entered on the Stationers' Books, being registered on February 7. 1602-3, "*as acted by my Lord Chamberlen's men* *," who, in the year of the accession of King James, obtained a

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 127.

licence for their theatre, and were denominated “ *his majesty's servants.*”

It also appears, from some entries in Mr. Henslowe's Manuscript, that a drama on this subject, at first called *Troyelles and Cresseda*, but, before its production, altered in its title to “ *The Tragedy of Agamemnon,*” was in existence anterior to Shakspeare's play, and was licensed by the Master of the Revels, on the 3rd of June, 1599. *

From these premises we have a right to infer that our poet's *Troilus and Cressida* was written between June, 1599, and February, 1603, and, accordingly, our two chronologers have thus placed it; Mr. Malone in 1602, and Mr. Chalmers in 1600. But it appears to us, for reasons which we shall immediately assign, that its more probable era is that of 1601.

It has been correctly observed by the Commentators, that an incident in our author's *Troilus and Cressida*, is ridiculed in an anonymous comedy, entitled *Histriomastix*, “ which, though not printed till 1610, must have been written before the death of Queen Elizabeth, who, in the last act of the piece, is shadowed, under the character of Astræa, and is spoken of as then living.” †

We cannot avoid thinking it somewhat extraordinary that when Mr. Malone recorded this circumstance, it did not occur to him, that, by placing the composition of Shakspeare's play in 1602, he allowed scarcely any time to the author of *Histriomastix* for the composition of his work. In order that a parody or burlesque may be successful, it is necessary that the production ridiculed, should have acquired a certain degree of celebrity, and however well received by the court, before which it was at first chiefly performed, this drama of our author may have been, some time must have elapsed ere it could have acquired a sufficient degree of notoriety for the purpose of successful satire. But if Shakspeare wrote his *Troilus and Cressida* in 1602, and had even completed it by the middle of the year, scarcely nine months

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 391.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 319.

could intervene between this completion and the death of the Queen in March, 1603; and during this short interval, the play of our poet must have been acted, and celebrated so repeatedly and so highly, as to have excited the pen of envy and burlesque, and the comedy of *Histrionastix* must have been written and performed; a space certainly much too inadequate for these effects and results, more particularly if we are allowed to conclude, what most probably was the case, that the anonymous comedy was finished some months anterior to the decease of Elizabeth.

On the other hand, it would seem that Mr. Chalmers, by approximating the date of Shakspeare's play too closely to that of the elder drama, may be taxed with a similar error. That our poet was in the habit of adopting subjects which had been previously rendered popular on the stage, has been acknowledged by all his commentators, and that his attention was first attracted to the fable under consideration, by the play exhibited on Mr. Henslowe's theatre, there can be little doubt. But this production, we find, was not licensed by the Master of the Revels until June, 1599, and as popularity attached to the performance would be necessary to stimulate Shakspeare to remodel the subject, we can scarcely conceive him, both on this account, and from a motive of delicacy to a rival theatre, to have commenced the composition of his *Troilus and Cressida* before the beginning of 1601.

It was at this period then, that our bard, excited by the success of the prior attempt in 1599, turned his attention to the subject; and, referring to his Chaucer, to Caxton's Translation of the *Recuyles or Destruction of Troy*, from *Raoul le Fevre*, and to the first seven books of Chapman's Homer, for the materials of his story, presented us with the most singular, and, in some respects, the most striking, of his productions.

This play is, indeed, a most perfect *unique* both in its construction and effect, appearing to be a continued sarcasm on the *tale of Troy divine*, an ironical copy, as it were, of the great Homeric picture. Whether this was in the contemplation of Shakspeare, or whether it

might not, in a great measure, flow from the nature of the Gothic narratives to which he had recourse, may admit of some doubt. As Homer, however, was in part before him, in the excellent version of Chapman, it appears to us, that it certainly was his design to expose the follies and absurdities of the Trojan war; the despicable nature of its origin, and the furious discords which protracted its issue. In doing this he has stripped the Homeric characters of all their epic pomp; he has laid them naked to the very heart, but he has, at the same time, individualised them, with a pencil so keen, powerful, and discriminating, that we become more intimately acquainted with them, as mere men, from the perusal of this play, than from all the splendid descriptions of the Greek poet.

This unparalleled strength and distinctness of characterisation, as unfolded in the play before us, has been admirably painted by Mr. Godwin. "The whole catalogue," he observes, "of the *Dramatis Personæ* in the play of *Troilus and Cressida*, so far as they depend upon a rich and original vein of humour in the author, are drawn with a felicity which never was surpassed. The genius of Homer has been a topic of admiration to almost every generation of men since the period in which he wrote. But his characters will not bear the slightest comparison with the delineation of the same characters as they stand in Shakspeare. This is a species of honour which ought by no means to be forgotten when we are making the eulogium of our immortal bard, a sort of illustration of his greatness which cannot fail to place it in a very conspicuous light. The dispositions of men perhaps had not been sufficiently unfolded in the very early period of intellectual refinement when Homer wrote; the rays of humour had not been dissected by the glass, or rendered perdurable by the pencil, of the poet. Homer's characters are drawn with a laudable portion of variety, and consistency; but his Achilles, his Ajax, and his Nestor are, each of them, rather a species than an individual, and can boast more of the propriety of abstraction, than of the vivacity of a moving scene of absolute life. The Achilles, the Ajax, and the various Grecian heroes of Shakspeare, on the other hand, are absolute men,

deficient in nothing which can tend to individualise them, and already touched with the Promethean fire that might infuse a soul into what, without it, were lifeless form. From the rest perhaps the character of Thersites deserves to be selected, (how cold and school-boy a sketch in Homer,) as exhibiting an appropriate vein of sarcastic humour amidst his cowardice, and a profoundness and truth in his mode of laying open the foibles of those about him, impossible to be excelled.

“ Shakspeare possessed, no man in higher perfection, the true dignity and loftiness of the poetical afflatus, which he has displayed in many of the finest passages of his works with miraculous success. But he knew that no man ever was, or ever can be, always dignified. He knew that those subtler traits of character which identify a man, are familiar and relaxed, pervaded with passion, and not played off with an external eye to decorum. In this respect the peculiarities of Shakspeare’s genius are no where more forcibly illustrated than in the play we are here considering. The champions of Greece and Troy, from the hour in which their names were first recorded, had always worn a certain formality of attire, and marched with a slow and measured step. No poet, till this time, had ever ventured to force them out of the manner which their epic creator had given them. Shakspeare first supplied their limbs, took from them the classic stiffness of their gait, and enriched them with an entire set of those attributes, which might render them completely beings of the same species with ourselves.” *

The great defect of this play, which, in other respects, is highly entertaining and instructive, and abounding in didactic morality, expressed with the utmost beauty, vigour, and boldness of diction, is a want of attachment for its characters. If we set aside Hector, who seems to have been the favourite hero with Shakspeare, and his Gothic authorities, there is not a person in the drama, for whom we

* Life of Chaucer, vol. i. pp. 509—512. 8vo. edit.

feel any sympathy or interest ; the Grecian chiefs, though varied and coloured in the highest style of relief, are any thing but amiable, and of the persons involved in the love-intrigue, two are proverbially infamous, whilst the forsaken Troilus appears in too tame and inefficient a light to call forth any share of admiration or regret.

23. KING HENRY THE EIGHTH: 1602. Few of the plays of Shakspeare have occasioned more difference of opinion, with regard to the era of their production, than this historical drama. Mr. Malone contends that it was written in 1601 or 1602, and that, after having lain by for some years unacted, on account of the costliness of its exhibition, it was revived in 1613, under the title of *All is True*, with new decorations, and a new prologue and epilogue ; and that this revival took place on the very day, being St. Peter's, on which the Globe Theatre was burnt down, occasioned, it is said, by the discharge of some small pieces, called chambers, on King Henry's arrival at Cardinal Wolsey's gate at Whitehall, one of which, being injudiciously managed, set fire to the thatched roof of the theatre. He also joins with Dr. Johnson and Dr. Farmer in conceiving, that the prologue, and even some part of the dialogue, were, on this occasion, written by Ben Jonson, to whom he also ascribes the conduct and superintendence of the representation. *

Mr. Chalmers, on the contrary, believes that this piece was neither represented nor written before 1613, and that its first appearance on the stage was the night of the conflagration above-mentioned. He reprobates the folly of supposing " that Ben Jonson, *who was in perpetual hostility with Shakspeare*, made *adycyons* to *Henry VIII.*, or even wrote the prologue for our poet." †

And, lastly, Mr. Gifford declares it to be his conviction that the tragedy of our poet was produced in 1601 ; but that, on the supposed revival of it in 1613, neither the prologue was written by Jonson, nor

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. pp. 312. 316.

† Supplemental Apology, p. 446. et seq.

the play by Shakspeare, the piece then performed being a *new play*, called *All is Truth*, constructed, indeed, on the history of Henry the Eighth, and, like that, full of shows, but not the composition of our author. He has here likewise, as every where else, very successfully combated the prejudice and credulity of the commentators, in their perpetual assumption of the enmity of Jonson to Shakspeare, *

For the arguments by which these conflicting opinions are maintained, we must refer to the respective writings of the combatants, our limits only permitting us to state and briefly to support one or two circumstances which, in our view of them, seem irresistibly to prove, that, in the first place, the play performed on the 29th of June, 1613, was *Shakspeare's tragedy of Henry the Eighth*; and, secondly, that it was *his tragedy revived*, with a new name, and with a *new prologue, both emanating from himself*.

Now, if the prologue which has always accompanied our author's drama from its first publication in 1623, *manifestly and repeatedly allude* to the *title* of the play which was represented on the 29th of June, 1613, and which we know to have been founded on the history of King Henry the Eighth, can there be a stronger proof of their identity, or a more satisfactory reply to the query of Mr. Gifford, who asks, who would have recognised *Henry the Eighth* under the name of *All is Truth*? (or rather, as he should have said, *All is True*?) than what these intimations afford? That they have, indeed, been noticed both by Mr. Tyrwhitt and Mr. Malone, as alluding to the title in question, is true; but they appear to us so important and decisive, as to merit being brought forward more distinctly, especially as they have escaped Mr. Gifford's attention. We shall therefore transcribe them, being convinced that not accident but design dictated their insertion:—

“ Such, as give
Their money out of hope they may believe,
May here find *truth* too.

* The Works of Ben Jonson, by W. Gifford, Esq. 9 vols. 8vo. 1816. vol. i. p. cclxxii.

“Gentle readers, know,
To rank *our chosen truth* with such a show
As fool and fight is,” &c. —

“To make that only *true* we now intend.”

That the play represented at the Globe in 1613, was merely a *revived* play, wants no other proof than the following:—In a MS. letter of Tho. Lorkin to Sir Tho. Puckering, dated *London, this last of June, 1613*, Lorkin tells his friend, that “No longer since than YESTERDAY, while Bourbage his companie were acting at the Globe *THE play of Hen. VIII.* and there shooting of certayne chambers in way of triumph, the fire caught,” &c. *

We would now enquire if it were possible that any rational person writing from London to his friend in the country, concerning a *new* play which had been performed, for the first time, but the day before the date of his letter, could make use of language such as this? Must he not necessarily have said, *a play, or a new play, called Hen. VIII.*? And does not the phraseology which he has adopted, namely, “*THE play of Hen. VIII.*,” evidently imply that the piece had been long known?

So decidedly, in our opinion, do these two circumstances prove, that it was *Shakspeare's Henry the Eighth* REVIVED, which was performed at the Globe Theatre on St. Peter's day, 1613, that we no longer hesitate a moment in admitting, with the principal commentators, that this tragedy was originally written but a short time anterior to the death of Elizabeth, to whom some elegant and appropriate praise is offered; and that the compliment to James the First, rather forcibly introduced into the closing scene, was composed by our poet expressly for the revival of 1613; admissions which not only seem warranted by the internal evidence of the play, but almost necessarily flow from the establishment of the two inferences for which we have contended.

* MS. Harl. 7002.—Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xv. p. 6.

There is much reason to conclude that, in the long interval between the death of Queen Elizabeth, and the year 1613, our author's *Henry the Eighth* had never been performed; and it is further probable that, on this account, and in consequence of its receiving a *new* name, a *new* prologue and epilogue, and *new* decorations of unprecedented splendour, the players might, as Mr. Malone has suggested, have called it in the bills of that time a *new* play*; an epithet which we find Sir Henry Wotton has adopted, when describing the accident at the Globe Theatre, and which, if writing in haste, or with less attention to the history of the stage than occurs in the letter of Mr. Lorkin, he might, from similar causes, naturally be expected to repeat. †

In adjusting the chronology of this play Mr. Malone has remarked, that Shakspeare, having produced so many plays in the preceding years, "it is not likely that *King Henry the Eighth* was written before 1601. It might, perhaps, with *equal propriety*, be ascribed to 1602." ‡ We have fixed upon the latter date, for this obvious reason, that our enquiries, having led us to supply the preceding year with two plays, it has been thought more consonant to probability to assign it to the less occupied period of 1602. It appears to us, therefore, to have been composed about a twelvemonth previous to the death of the Queen, an event which occurred in March, 1603.

It need scarcely be added, that, from Mr. Gifford's complete refutation of the slander which has been so long indulged in against the character of Ben Jonson, we utterly disbelieve that this calumniated poet had any concern in the revival of *Henry the Eighth*.

The entire interest of this tragedy turns upon the characters of *Queen Katharine* and *Cardinal Wolsey*; the former being the finest picture of suffering and defenceless virtue, and the latter of disappointed ambition, that poet ever drew. The close of the second

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 317.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 312.

‡ Reliq. Wotton. p. 425.

scene of the third act, which describes the fall of Wolsey, and the whole of the second scene of the fourth, which paints the dying sorrows and devout resignation of the persecuted Queen, have, as lessons of moral worth, a never-dying value; and of the latter, especially, it may without extravagance be said, that, in its power of exciting sympathy and compassion, it stands perfectly unrivalled by any dramatic effort of ancient or of modern time.

24. *TIMON OF ATHENS*: 1602. The existence of a manuscript play on this subject, to which our author has been evidently indebted, ought, in the absence of all other direct testimony, to be considered as our guiding star. Here, says Mr. Malone, our poet "found the faithful steward, the banquet scene, and the story of Timon's being possessed of great sums of gold which he had dug up in the woods: a circumstance which he could not have had from Lucian, there being then no translation of the dialogue that relates to this subject*;" and, in another place he remarks, that this manuscript comedy "appears to have been written after Ben Jonson's *Every Man out of his Humour*, (1599,) to which it contains a reference; but I have not discovered the precise time when it was composed. If it were ascertained, it might be some guide to us in fixing the date of our author's *Timon of Athens*, which I suppose to have been posterior to this anonymous play." †

Now Mr. Steevens, who accurately inspected the manuscript play, tells us that it appears to have been written about the year 1600 ‡, whilst Mr. Chalmers has brought forward several intimations which, he thinks, prove, that Shakspeare's drama was written during the reign of Elizabeth. §

These statements, it is obvious, bring the subject into a small compass; for as the anonymous comedy must have been composed after 1599, referring, as it does, to a drama of that date, and as some

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xix. p. 3.

‡ Ibid. vol. xix. p. 2.

† Ibid. vol. ii. pp. 355, 356.

§ Supplemental Apology, p. 391.

incidents in Shakspeare's *Timon* are evidently founded upon it, whilst the death of Elizabeth took place in March, 1603, the play of our poet must necessarily, if Mr. Chalmers's intimations be relied upon, have been completed in the interim.

Indeed the only argument on the other side for fixing the date of this play in 1609, is built upon the supposition that Shakspeare commenced the study of Plutarch in 1605, and that having once availed himself of this historian for one of his plays, he was induced to proceed, until *Julius Cæsar*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Timon*, and *Coriolanus*, had been written in succession.* But, as it has been clearly ascertained by Mr. Chalmers, that Shakspeare was perfectly well acquainted with Plutarch when he wrote his *Hamlet*†, this supposition can no longer be tenable.

We have fixed on the year 1602 rather than 1601, for the era of the composition of our author's play, as it is equally susceptible of the illustration adduced by Mr. Chalmers, allows more scope for the production of the elder drama, and, at the same time, more opportunity to our poet to have become familiar with a comedy which, there is reason to think, from its pedantic style, was never popular, and certainly never was printed.

Timon of Athens is an admirable satire on the folly and ingratitude of mankind; the former exemplified in the thoughtless profusion of *Timon*, the latter in the conduct of his pretended friends; it is, as Dr. Johnson observes, "a very powerful warning against that ostentatious liberality, which scatters bounty, but confers no benefits, and buys flattery, but not friendship."‡

But the mighty reach of Shakspeare's mind is in this play more particularly distinguishable in his delineation of the species and causes of misanthropy, and in the management of the delicate shades which diversify its effects on the heart of man. *Timon* and *Apemantus*

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 354.

† Supplemental Apology, p. 394.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xix. p. 214. note.

are both misanthropes ; but from very different causes, and with very different consequences, and yet they mutually illustrate each other.

The misanthropy of Timon arises from the perversion of what would otherwise have been the foundation of his happiness. He possesses great goodness and benevolence of heart, an ardent love of mankind, a spirit noble, enthusiastic, and confiding, but these are unfortunately directed into wrong channels by the influence of vanity, and the thirst of distinction. Rich in the amplest means of dispensing bounty, he receives, in return, such abundant praise, especially from the least deserving and the most designing, that he becomes intoxicated with adulation, craving it, at length, with the avidity of an appetite, and preferring the applause of the world to the silent approval of his own conscience.

The immediate consequence of this delusion is, that he seeks to bestow only where celebrity is to follow ; he does not fly to succour poverty, misfortune, and disease, in their sequestered haunts, but he showers his gifts on poets, painters, warriors, and statesmen, on men of talents or of rank, whose flattery, either from genius or from station, will find an echo in the world. The next result of beneficence thus abused, is that Timon possesses numerous *nominal* but no *real* friends, and, when the hour of trial comes, he is, to a man, deserted in his utmost need. It is then, that having no estimate of friendship but what reposed on the characters who have left him bare to the storm, and concluding that the rest of mankind, compared with those whom he had selected, are rather worse than better, he gives loose to all the invective which deceived affection and wounded vanity can suggest ; feeling, as it were, an abhorrence of, and an aversion to, his species, in proportion to the keenness of his original sensibility, and the agony of his present disappointment.

The inherent goodness of Timon on the one hand, and his avarice of praise and flattery on the other, are vividly brought out through the medium of his servants, and of the Cynic Apemantus. The true criterion, indeed, of the worth of any individual, is best found in the estimation of his household, and we entertain a high sense of the

value of Timon's character, from the attachment and fidelity of his dependants. They, in their humble intercourse with their master, have intimately felt the native benevolence of his disposition, and, to the disgrace of those who have revelled in his bounty, are the only sympathizers in his fate. They call to mind his generous virtues : —

“ Poor honest lord, brought low by his own heart ;
Undone by goodness ! ”

is the exclamation of his faithful steward ; nor are the inferior domestics less sensible of his worth : —

“ 1 *Serv.* So noble a master fallen ! — and not
One friend, to take his fortune by the arm ! —
3 *Serv.* Yet do our hearts wear Timon's livery,
That see I by our faces.” *

When Flavius visits his master in his seclusion, and with the most disinterested views and the most heart-felt commiseration, offers him his wealth and his attendance, Timon starts back with amazement bordering on distraction, afflicted and aghast at the recognition, when too late, of genuine friendship, and self-convicted of injustice towards his fellow-creatures : —

“ Had I a steward so true, so just, and now
So comfortable ? It almost turns
My dangerous nature wild. † Let me behold
Thy face. — Surely, this man was born of woman. —
Forgive my general and exceptless rashness,
Perpetual-sober gods ! I do proclaim
One honest man, — mistake me not, — but one ;
No more, I pray, — and he is a steward. —
How fain would I have hated all mankind,
And thou redeem'st thyself ! ” ‡

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xix. pp. 125—127.

† I conceive that by “ *dangerous nature* ” in this passage, is meant a nature, from acute sensibility and sudden misfortune, liable to be overpowered, to be thrown off its poize, and to suffer from mental derangement.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xix. pp. 182, 183.

If the constitutional goodness of Timon is to be inferred from the conduct of his domestics, the errors which overshadowed it are most distinctly laid open by the unsparing invective of Apemantus. The misanthropy of this character is not based, like Timon's, on the wreck of the noblest feelings of our nature, on the milk of human kindness turned to gall, but springs from the vilest of our passions, from envy, hatred, and malice. He is born a beggar, and his pride is to continue such, while his sole occupation, his pleasure and his choice, is to drag forth the vices, and calumniate the virtues of humanity. For this task he possesses, in the powers of his intellect, the utmost efficiency, and seems, indeed, to have been introduced by the poet for the express purpose of unfolding the conduct of Timon. The two characters, in fact, reciprocally anatomise each other, and with a depth and minuteness which leaves nothing undetected.

The lust of flattery and distinction which burns in the bosom of Timon, finds, even in the height of his prosperity, a sharp, and therefore a wholesome reprovcr in Apemantus, who tells the Athenian to his face, that "he that loves to be flattered, is worthy of the flatterer," at the same time exposing his limitless and ill-bestowed bounty in the strongest terms; but no good man would choose the hour of adversity and overwhelming distress for a still bitterer torrent of taunts and reproaches, at a period when nothing but additional misery could accrue from the experiment. Such, however, is the object of Apemantus, in his visit to the cave of Timon, and accordingly he experiences the reception which his motives so richly deserve: —

Tim. Why dost thou seek me out?

Apem. To vex thee.

Tim. Always a villain's office, or a fool's.

Dost please thyself in't!

Apem.

Ay.

Tim.

What! a knave too?"

immediately after which, the unhappy Timon proceeds, with admirable discrimination, to contrast himself and his persecutor; a descrip-

tion which, for strength and severity, as well as truth of censure, has never been exceeded : —

“ *Tim.* Thou art a slave, whom Fortune’s tender arm
 With favour never clasp’d ; but bred a dog.
 Had’st thou like us, from our first swath, proceeded
 The sweet degrees that this brief world affords
 To such as may the passive drugs of it
 Freely command, thou would’st have plung’d thyself
 In general riot ; melted down thy youth
 In different beds of lust ; and never learn’d
 The icy precepts of respect, but follow’d
 The sugar’d game before thee. But myself,
 Who had the world as my confectionary ;
 The mouths, the tongues, the eyes, and hearts of men
 At duty, more than I could frame employment ;
 That numberless upon me stuck, as leaves
 Do on the oak, have with one winter’s brush
 Fell from their boughs, and left me open, bare
 For every storm that blows ; — I, to bear this,
 That never knew but better, is some burden :
 Thy nature did commence in sufferance, time
 Hath made thee hard in’t. Why should’st thou hate men ?
 They never flatter’d thee : What hast thou given ?
 If thou wilt curse, — thy father, that poor rag,
 Must be thy subject ; who, in spite, put stuff
 To some she-beggar, and compounded thee,
 Poor rogue hereditary. Hence ! be gone ! —
 If thou hadst not been born the worst of men,
 Thou hadst been a knave, and flatterer.” *

In revenge for this correct, but tremendous picture of himself, Apemantus, shortly afterwards, presents Timon with a miniature of his own character, so faithfully condensed, that it comprises, in about a dozen words, the entire history of his life ; the indiscriminate generosity of his early, and the extravagant misanthropy, of his latter days : —

“ The middle of humanity thou never knewest, but the extremity of both ends.” †

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xix. pp. 159—165. Act iv. sc. 3.

† Ibid. vol. xix. p. 166.

The widely different fate of these two characters, is, likewise, decisive of the opposite origin and nature of their misanthropical conduct. Timon, that

“ monument,
And wonder of good deeds evilly betow'd,” *

dies broken-hearted, a martyr to self-delusion, and to the ingratitude of mankind ; whilst Apemantus, wrapped up in constitutional apathy, travels on unscathed, a general and unfeeling railer on the frailty of his species.

25. MEASURE FOR MEASURE : 1603. Mr. Malone's reasons for placing the composition of this play towards the close of 1603, appear to us perfectly unshaken by the arguments which Mr. Chalmers has brought forward for the purpose of referring it to the subsequent year. The validity of the alteration which this gentleman wishes to establish, turns almost altogether on the cogency of the following statement : — “ Claudio,” he says, “ complains of ‘ *the neglected act being enforced against him.*’ Isabella laments her being the sister of one Claudio, condemned, on the *act of fornication*, to lose his head. Now, the act which was thus alluded to, though not with the precision of an Old Bailey solicitor, ‘ was the statute to restrain all persons from marriage, until their former wives, and former husbands be dead,’ for which such persons, so offending, were to *suffer death*, as in cases of felony. It was against this act, then, which did not operate till after the end of the session, on the 7th of July, 1604, that Shakspeare's satire was levelled.” †

But this very act, it seems from Mr. Chalmers's reference, was passed in the second year of James the First, and how, therefore, could Claudio's complaint of a “ *neglected act being enforced against him,*” apply to a statute thus recently issued, and whose operation had only just commenced ? The objection is insurmountable, and

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xix. p. 179.

† Supplemental Apology, pp. 411, 412.

Claudio's allusion was most assuredly to the act formerly passed on this subject in the first year of Edward the Sixth.

The primary source of the fable of *Measure for Measure*, is to be traced to the fifth novel of the eighth decade of the *Ecatommithi* of Giraldi Cinthio, which was repeated in the tragic histories of Belle Forest; but Shakspeare's immediate original was the play of *Promos and Cassandra* of George Whetstone, published in 1578, and of which the argument, as given by the author, has been annexed by Mr. Steevens to Shakspeare's production. On this elder drama, and on Shakspeare's improvements on its plot, the following pertinent remarks have been lately made by Mr. Dunlop: — "The crime of the brother," he observes, speaking of Whetstone's comedy, "is softened into seduction: Nor is he actually executed for his transgression, as a felon's head is presented in place of the one required by the magistrate. The king being complained to, orders the magistrate's head to be struck off, and the sister begs his life, even before she knows that her brother is safe. Shakspeare has adopted the alteration in the brother's crime, and the substitution of the felon's head. The preservation of the brother's life by this device might have been turned to advantage, as affording a ground for the intercession of his sister; but Isabella pleads for the life of Angelo before she knows her brother is safe, and when she is bound to him by no tie, as the Duke does not order him to marry Isabella. From his own imagination Shakspeare had added the character of Mariana, Angelo's forsaken mistress, who saves the honour of the heroine by being substituted in her place. Isabella, indeed, had refused, even at her brother's intercession, to give up her virtue to preserve his life. This is an improvement on the incidents of the novel, as it imperceptibly diminishes our sense of the atrocity of Angelo, and adds dignity to the character of the heroine. The secret superintendence, too, of the Duke over the whole transaction, has a good effect, and increases our pleasure in the detection of the villain. In the fear of Angelo, lest the brother should take revenge 'for so receiving a dishonoured life,

with ransom of such shame,' Shakspeare has given a motive to conduct which, in his prototypes, is attributed to wanton cruelty." *

Of *Measure for Measure*, independent of the comic characters which afford a rich fund of entertainment, the great charm springs from the lovely example of female excellence in the person of Isabella. Piety, spotless purity, tenderness combined with firmness, and an eloquence the most persuasive, unite to render her singularly interesting and attractive. To save the life of her brother, she hastens to quit the peaceful seclusion of her convent, and moves, amid the votaries of corruption and hypocrisy, amid the sensual, the vulgar, and the profligate, as a being of a higher order, as a ministering spirit from the throne of grace. Her first interview with Angelo, and the immediately subsequent one with Claudio, exhibit, along with the most engaging feminine diffidence and modesty, an extraordinary display of intellectual energy, of dexterous argument, and of indignant contempt. Her pleadings before the lord deputy are directed with a strong appeal both to his understanding and his heart, while her sagacity and address in the communication of the result of her appointment with him to her brother, of whose weakness and irresolution she is justly apprehensive, are, if possible, still more skilfully marked, and add another to the multitude of instances which have established for Shakspeare an unrivalled intimacy with the finest feelings of our nature.

The page of poetry, indeed, has not two nobler passages to produce, than those which paint the suspicions of Isabella as to the fortitude of her brother, her encouragement of his nascent resolution, and the fears which he subsequently entertains of the consequences of dissolution : —

“ *Isab.* O, I do fear thee, Claudio; and I quake,
Lest thou a feverous life should'st entertain,

* History of Fiction, vol. ii. 1st edit. pp. 367, 368. — See Mr. Douce's enumeration of the sources whence the plot of this play might have been extracted, in his *Illustrations*, vol. i. p. 152. et seq.

And six or seven winters more respect
 Than a perpetual honour. Dar'st thou die?
 The sense of death is most in apprehension;
 And the poor beetle, that we tread upon,
 In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great
 As when a giant dies.

Claud. Why give you me this shame?
 Think you I can a resolution fetch
 From flowery tenderness? If I must die,
 I will encounter darkness as a bride,
 And hug it in mine arms.

Isab. There spake my brother; there my father's grave
 Did utter forth a voice! " *

On learning the terms which would effect his liberation, his astonishment and indignation are extreme, and he exclaims with vehemence to his sister, —

“ Thou shalt not do't; ”

but no sooner does this burst of moral anger subside, than the natural love of existence returns, and he endeavours to impress Isabella, under the wish of exciting her to the sacrifice demanded for his preservation, with the horrible possibilities which may follow the extinction of this state of being, an enumeration which makes the blood run chill : —

“ *Claud.* O Isabel !

Isab. What says my brother?

Claud. Death is a fearful thing.

Isab. And shamed life a hateful.

Claud. Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
 To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
 This sensible warm motion to become
 A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
 To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
 In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
 To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
 And blown with restless violence round about

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vi. p. 298, 299. Act iii. sc. 1.

The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
 Of those, that lawless and incertain thoughts
 Imagine howling! — 'tis too horrible!
 The weariest and most loathed worldly life,
 That age, ach, penury, and imprisonment
 Can lay on nature, is a paradise
 To what we fear of death.

Isab. Alas! alas!" *

"It is difficult to decide," remarks Mr. Douce, "whether Shakspeare is here alluding to the pains of hell or purgatory. May not the whole be a mere poetical rhapsody, originating in the recollection of what he had read in books of Catholic divinity? for it is very certain, that some of these were extremely familiar to him." †

Of our author's predilection for the imposing exterior, and fanciful, but often sublime, reveries of the Roman Catholic religion, we have already taken some notice; and, in reference to the very interesting part which the Duke assumes in this play, under the disguise of a monk, it is the observation of the learned and eloquent Schlegel, "that Shakspeare, amidst the rancour of religious parties, takes a delight in painting the condition of a monk, and always represents his influence as beneficial. We find in him none of the black and knavish monks, which an enthusiasm for the protestant religion, rather than poetical inspiration, has suggested to some of our modern poets. Shakspeare merely gives his monks an inclination to busy themselves in the affairs of others, after renouncing the world for themselves; with respect, however, to pious frauds, he does not represent them as very conscientious. Such are the parts acted by the monk in *Romeo and Juliet*, and another in *Much Ado about Nothing*, and even by the Duke, whom, contrary to the well-known proverb, the cowl seems really to make a monk." ‡

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vi. pp. 303—306. Act iii. sc. 1.

† Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 132., where several passages, which may have suggested the imagery in Claudio's description, are quoted.

‡ Lectures on Dramatic Literature, vol. ii. p. 169.

26. KING LEAR: 1604. Both the chronologers have assigned to this tragedy the date of 1605; but it appears to us more probable that its production is to be attributed to the close of the year 1604. It certainly was written between the publication of Harsnet's *Declaration of Popish Impostures*, in 1603, and the Christmas of 1606; for Shakspeare undoubtedly borrowed, as the commentators have justly observed, the fantastic names of several spirits from the above mentioned work, whilst in the entry of Lear on the Stationers' Registers, on the 26th of November, 1607, it is expressly recorded to have been played, during the preceding Christmas, before His Majesty at Whitehall.

It is from the following facts, as established by Mr. Chalmers, together with two or three additional circumstances, that we have been induced to throw back a few months the era of the composition of this play. "Lear is ascertained," observes Mr. Chalmers, "to have been written, after the month of October, 1604; say the commentators: (or rather says Mr. Malone) For, King James was proclaimed King of Great Britain, on the 24th of October, 1604; and, it is evident, that Shakspeare made a minute change in an old rhyming saw:—

"Fy, fa, fum,
I smell the blood of an *English* man;"

which Shakspeare, with great attention to the times, changed, in the following manner:—

"His word was still, Fie, foh, fum,
I smell the blood of a *British* man."

But, the fact is, that there was issued from Greenwich a royal proclamation, on the 13th of May, 1603; declaring that, till a compleat union, the King held, and esteemed, the two realms, as *presently* united, and as one kingdom; and, the poets, Daniel and Drayton, who wrote gratulatory verses, on his accession, spoke of the two kingdoms, as united, thereby, into one realm, by the name of Britain;

and of the inhabitants of England and Scotland, as one people, by the denomination of British." And he then adds, in a note: "Before King James arrived at London, Daniel offered to him 'A Panegyrike congratulatory, delivered to the King's most excellent Majesty at Burleigh-Harrington in Rutlandshire;' which was printed, in 1603, for Blount, with a Defence of Rhime: —

"Lo here the glory of a greater day
Than *England* ever heretofore could see
In all her days. —————
And now she is, and now in peace therefore
Shake hands with union, O thou mightie state,
Now thou art all *great Britain*, and no more,
No Scot, no English now, nor no debate." *

We see here, that even before James took possession of his capital, poetry had adopted the very language which Shakspeare has used in his *Lear*: and that, as early as the 13th of May, 1603, a proclamation had been issued, declaratory of the King's resolution to hold and esteem the two realms as united, and as forming but one kingdom.

These two events, therefore, were of themselves, a sufficient ground for the alteration which our bard thought proper to introduce, and which, if it occurred, as we suppose, anterior to the definitive proclamation of October, 1604, must have been considered, by the monarch, as the greater compliment, on that very account.

A strong additional argument in favour of this chronology, may be drawn from the attempt made in 1605, to impose on the public the old play of *King Leir* for the successful drama of our author. This production, which had been entered at Stationers' Hall in 1594, was, with this view, re-entered on the Stationers' books on the 8th of May, 1605, and the entry terminates with these words, "as it was *lately* acted." †

Now, as it was intended that the expression *lately* should be

* Supplemental Apology, pp. 417, 418.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 127.

referred, by the reader, to our author's play, for which this was meant to be received, it follows, as an almost necessary consequence, from the common acceptation of the term, that the *Lear* of Shakspeare had been acted some months anteriorly, and was not then actually performing, an inference which agrees well with the date which we have adopted, but cannot be made to accord with Mr. Malone's supposition of Shakspeare's tragedy appearing in April, 1605, and the spurious claimant in May, when there is every reason to conclude that our poet's drama was then nightly, or, at least, weekly delighting the public.

Another circumstance in support of the era which we have chosen for this play, is to be derived from the consideration, that, in Mr. Malone's arrangement, *Cymbeline* is assigned, and, in our opinion, correctly assigned, to the year 1605, while, in consequence of the removal of *The Winter's Tale* to the epoch of 1613, a change founded on apparently substantial grounds, the year 1604 is left perfectly open to the admission for which we contend.

To the numerous sources mentioned by the * commentators, whence Shakspeare may have drawn the materials of his *Lear*, is to be added the celebrated French Romance, entitled *Perceforest*, which, next to the *Gesta Romanorum*, and the *History of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, is the oldest authority extant. The story of King Leyr, as here related, corresponds, in all its leading features, with the fable of our poet. †

Of this noble tragedy, one of the first productions of the noblest of poets, it is scarcely possible to express our admiration in adequate terms. Whether considered as an effort of art, or as a picture of the passions, it is entitled to the highest praise. The two portions of

* For these consult not only the Variorum edition of Shakspeare, but Mr. Chalmers's Supplemental Apology, and Mr. Douce's Illustrations. See also the story of Lear, from Caxton's Chronicle of 1480, extracted by Mr. Dibdin, in the British Bibliographer, vol. ii. p. 578.

† Warton tells us, that *Perceforest* was originally a metrical romance, and written about the year 1220. See his *History of Poetry*, vol. i. p. 464.

which the fable consists, involving the fate of Lear and his daughters, and of Gloster and his sons, influence each other in so many points, and are blended with such consummate skill, that whilst the imagination is delighted by diversity of circumstances, the judgment is equally gratified in viewing their mutual co-operation towards the final result; the coalescence being so intimate, as not only to preserve the necessary unity of action, but to constitute one of the greatest beauties of the piece.

Such, indeed, is the interest excited by the structure and concatenation of the story, that the attention is not once suffered to flag. By a rapid succession of incidents, by sudden and overwhelming vicissitudes, by the most awful instances of misery and destitution, by the boldest contrariety of characters, are curiosity and anxiety kept progressively increasing, and with an impetus so strong, as nearly to absorb every faculty of the mind and every feeling of the heart.

Victims of frailty, of calamity, or of vice, in an age remote and barbarous, the actors in this drama are brought forward with a strength of colouring, which, had the scene been placed in a more civilised era, might have been justly deemed too dark and ferocious, but is not discordant with the earliest heathen age of Britain. The effect of this style of characterisation is felt occasionally throughout the entire play, but is particularly visible in the delineation of the vicious personages of the drama, the parts of Goneril, Regan, Edmund, and Cornwall being loaded, not only with ingratitude of the deepest dye, but with cruelty of the most savage and diabolical nature; they are the criminals, in fact, of an age where vice may be supposed to reign with lawless and gigantic power, and in which the extrusion of Gloster's eyes might be an event of no infrequent occurrence.

Had this mode of casting his characters in the extreme, been applied to the remainder of the *Dramatis Personæ*, we should have lost some of the finest lessons of humanity and wisdom that ever issued from the pen of an uninspired writer; but, with the exception of a few coarsenesses, which remind us of the barbarous period to

which the story is referred, and of a few incidents rather revolting to credibility, but which could not be detached from the original narrative, the virtuous agents of the play exhibit the manners and the feelings of civilisation, and are of that mixed fabric which can alone display a just portraiture of the nature and composition of our species.

The characters of Cordelia and Edgar, it is true, approach nearly to perfection, but the filial virtues of the former are combined with such exquisite tenderness of heart, and those of the latter with such bitter humiliation and suffering, that grief, indignation, and pity are instantly excited. Very striking representations are also given of the rough fidelity of Kent, and of the hasty credulity of Gloster; but it is in delineating the passions, feelings, and afflictions of Lear, that our poet has wrought up a picture of human misery which has never been surpassed, and which agitates the soul with the most overpowering emotions of sympathy and compassion.

The conduct of the unhappy monarch having been founded merely on the impulses of sensibility, and not on any fixed principle or rule of action, no sooner has he discovered the baseness of those on whom he had relied, and the fatal mistake into which he had been hurried by the delusions of inordinate fondness and extravagant expectation, than he feels himself bereft of all consolation and resource. Those to whom he had given all, for whom he had stripped himself of dignity and power, and on whom he had centered every hope of comfort and repose in his old age, his inhuman daughters, having not only treated him with utter coldness and contempt, but sought to deprive him of all the respectability, and even of the very means of existence, what in a mind so constituted as Lear's, the sport of intense and ill-regulated feeling, and tortured by the reflection of having deserted the only child who loved him, what but madness could be expected as the result? It was, in fact, the necessary consequence of the reciprocal action of complicated distress and morbid sensibility; and, in describing the approach of this dreadful infliction, in tracing its progress, its height, and sub-

sidence, our poet has displayed such an intimate knowledge of the workings of the human intellect, under all its aberrations, as would afford an admirable study for the enquirer into mental physiology. He has also in this play, as in that of Hamlet, finely discriminated between real and assumed insanity, Edgar, amidst all the wild imagery which his imagination has accumulated, never touching on the true source of his misery, whilst Lear, on the contrary, finds it associated with every object, and every thought, however distant or dissimilar. Not even the Orestes of Euripides, or the Clementina of Richardson, can, as pictures of disordered reason, be placed in competition with this of Lear; it may be pronounced, indeed, from its truth and completeness, beyond the reach of rivalry.

Of all the miseries incident to humanity the apprehension of approaching loss of reason is, perhaps, the most dreadful. Lear, on discovering the ingratitude of his eldest daughter, feels compunction for his treatment of the youngest: "I did her wrong," he exclaims, and such is the violence of the shock and the keenness of his sufferings, that, even in this first conflict of resentment and sorrow, he deprecates this heaviest of calamities:—

"O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!" *

But when Regan, following the example of her sister, inflicts upon him still greater dishonour, the fearful assurance is intimately felt, and he predicts its visitation in positive terms:—

—————"You think, I'll weep;
No, I'll not weep:—
I have full cause of weeping; but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
Or ere I'll weep. — *O, fool, I shall go mad!*" †

Nothing can impress us with a more tremendous idea of this awful state of mind, than the feelings of Lear during his exposure to the

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xvii. p. 381. Act i. sc. 5.

† Ibid. vol. xvii. p. 441. Act ii. sc. 4.

tempest. What, under other circumstances, would have been shrunk from with alarm and pain, is now unfelt, or only so, as a relief from deeper horrors : —

“ *Lear.* Thou think'st 'tis much, that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin : so 'tis to thee ;
But *where the greater malady is fix'd,*
The lesser is scarce felt. Thoud'st shun a bear :
But if thy flight lay toward the raging sea,
Thoud'st meet the bear i' the mouth. When the mind's free,
The body's delicate: *the tempest in my mind*
Doth from my senses take all feeling else,
Save what beats there. — Filial ingratitude !
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand,
For lifting food to't? — But I will punish home: —
No, I will weep no more. — In such a night
To shut me out ! — Pour on ; I will endure :
In such a night as this ! O Regan, Goneril ! —
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all, —
O, that way madness lies ; let me shun that ;
No more of that, —

Kent. Good my lord, enter here.

Lear. Pr'ythee, go in thyself ; seek thine own ease ;
This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
*On things would hurt me more.” **

It is at the close of this scene that the misfortune which he has dreaded so much, overtakes him : “ his wits,” as Kent observes, “ begin to unsettle ;” but it is not a total dereliction of intellect : Lear is neither absolutely delirious, nor maniacal ; but he labours under that species of hallucination which leaves to the wretched sufferer a sense of his own unhappiness : a state of being, beyond all others, calculated to awaken the most thrilling sensations of pity.

A picture of more terrible grandeur or of wilder sublimity, than what occurs, during the exposure of the aged monarch to the impetuous fury of the storm, was never imagined. Every thing conspires to render it unparalleled in its powers of impression. On a

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xvii. pp. 459—461. Act iii. sc. 4.

night, when the conflicting elements of fire, air, and water, deafen nature itself with their uproar ; on a night,

——— “ wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,
The lion and the belly-pinched wolf
Keep their fur dry,” *

is the miserable old king driven out by his unnatural daughters, to wander over a bleak and barren heath in search of shelter, destitute of even common necessities, a very beggar on the bounty of his former subjects, and accompanied only by his fool, and the faithful though banished Kent. It is with difficulty that they persuade him to take refuge from the storm ; at length, he yields, at the same time addressing the fool in terms which, perhaps more than any other lines in the play, unveil the native goodness of his heart : —

————— “ Come, your hovel,
*Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee.*” †

No sooner, however, has the fool entered this hovel, than he returns horror-struck, followed by Edgar, who rushes on the heath, an almost naked maniac, and exclaiming,

“ Away ! the foul fiend follows me ! —
Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind.” ‡

The dialogue which now ensues between these extraordinary characters is, of itself, a proof of the boundless expansion of the poet's mind. The torrent of agonizing grief and resentment which flows from Lear, abandoned by his daughters, verging towards insanity, and aware of its approach ; the wild exuberance of fancy which thrills in the phrenzied accents of Edgar, who, under the disguise of a mad-man tormented by demons, is flying from death threatened by a

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xvii. pp. 445, 446. Act iii. sc. 1.

† Ibid. p. 456. Act iii. sc. 2.

‡ Ibid. p. 463. Act iii. sc. 4.

father ; and the quaint mixture of wisdom, pleasantry, and satire in the language of the honest fool, who yet heightens, while he means to alleviate the distresses of his master, are elements of mental strife which harmonise with, and add a kind of illimitable horror to the storm which howls around.

Nor inferior to this in merit, though of a totally different cast, is the scene in which the exhausted monarch, having been lulled to sleep through the effects of an opiate, is awakened by the sound of music, whilst Cordelia, hanging over him, with an almost breathless anxiety, at length ventures to address him. The language of the poor old man, in the moment of partial reminiscence, is, beyond any other effort of human composition, simple and affecting : —

Cor. How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

Lear. You do me wrong, to take me out of the grave : —

Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound

Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears

Do scald like molten lead.

Cor. Sir, do you know me?

Lear. You are a spirit, I know; when did you die? —

Cor. O, look upon me, sir,

And hold your hands in benediction o'er me : —

No, sir, you must not kneel.

Lear. Pray, do not mock me:

I am a very foolish fond old man,

Fourscore and upward; and, to deal plainly,

I fear, I am not in my perfect mind.

Methinks, I should know you, and know this man;

Yet I am doubtful: for I am mainly ignorant

What place this is; and all the skill I have

Remembers not these garments; nor I know not

Where I did lodge last night: Do not laugh at me;

For, as I am a man, I think this lady

To be my child Cordelia.

Cor. And so I am, I am.

Lear. Be your tears wet? Yes, 'faith. I pray, weep not:

If you have poison for me, I will drink it.

I know, you do not love me; for your sisters

Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:

You have some cause, they have not.

Cor. No cause, no cause. —

Lear. You must bear with me;
Pray now, forget and forgive: I am old and foolish." *

27. CYMBELINE: 1605. This play, if not, in the construction of its fable, one of the most perfect of our author's productions, is, in point of poetic beauty, of variety and truth of character, and in the display of sentiment and emotion, one of the most lovely and interesting. Nor can we avoid expressing our astonishment at the sweeping condemnation which Johnson has passed upon it; charging its fiction with folly, its conduct with absurdity, its events with impossibility; terming its faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation. †

Of the enormous injustice of this sentence, nearly every page of *Cymbeline* will, to a reader of any taste or discrimination, bring the most decisive evidence. That it possesses many of the too common inattentions of Shakspeare, that it exhibits a frequent violation of costume, and a singular confusion of nomenclature, cannot be denied; but these are trifles light as air, when contrasted with its merits, which are of the very essence of dramatic worth, rich and full in all that breathes of vigour, animation, and intellect, in all that elevates the fancy, and improves the heart, in all that fills the eye with tears, or agitates the soul with hope and fear.

In possession of excellences, vital as these must be deemed, cold and fastidious is the criticism that, on account of irregularities in mere technical detail, would shut its eyes upon their splendour. Nor are there wanting critics of equal learning with, and superior taste to Johnson, who have considered what he has branded with the unqualified charge of "confusion of manners," as forming, in a certain point of view, one of the most pleasing recommendations of the piece. Thus Schlegel, after characterising *Cymbeline* as one of Shakspeare's most wonderful compositions, adds, — "He has here connected a novel of Boccacio with traditionary tales of the ancient

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xvii. pp. 564—567. Act iv. sc. 7.

† Ibid. vol. xviii. p. 649.

Britons reaching back to the times of the first Roman Emperors, and *he has contrived, by the most gentle transitions, to blend together into one harmonious whole the social manners of the latest times with the heroic deeds, and even with appearances of the gods.*"* It may be also remarked, that, if the unities of time and place be as little observed in this play, as in many others of the same poet, unity of character and feeling, the test of genius, and without which the utmost effort of art will ever be unavailing, is uniformly and happily supported.

Imogen, the most lovely and perfect of Shakspeare's female characters, the pattern of connubial love and chastity, by the delicacy and propriety of her sentiments, by her sensibility, tenderness, and resignation, by her patient endurance of persecution from the quarter where she had confidently looked for endearment and protection, irresistibly seizes upon our affections; and when compelled to fly from the paternal roof, from

" A father cruel, and a step-dame false,
A foolish suitor to a wedded lady,
That hath her husband banished,"

she is driven to assume, under the name of Fidele, the disguise of a page, we follow her footsteps with the liveliest interest and admiration.

The scenes which disclose the incidents of her pilgrimage; her reception at the cave of Belarius; her intercourse with her lost brothers, who are ignorant of their birth and rank, her supposed death, funeral rites, and resuscitation, are wrought up with a mixture of pathos and romantic wildness, peculiarly characteristic of our author's genius, and which has had but few successful imitators. Among these few, stands pre-eminent the poet Collins, who seems to have trodden this consecrated ground with a congenial mind, and who has sung the sorrows of Fidele in strains worthy of their subject, and

* Lectures on Dramatic Literature, vol. ii. p. 183.

which will continue to charm the mind and soothe the heart "till pity's self be dead."

When compared with this fascinating portrait, the other personages of the drama appear but in a secondary light. Yet are they adequately brought out, and skilfully diversified; the treacherous subtlety of Iachimo, the sage experience of Belarius, the native nobleness of heart, and innate heroism of mind, which burst forth in the vigorous sketches of Guiderius and Arviragus, the temerity, credulity, and penitence of Posthumus, the uxorious weakness of Cymbeline, the hypocrisy of his Queen, and the comic arrogance of Cloten, half fool and half knave, produce a striking diversity of action and sentiment.

Of this latter character, the constitution has been thought so extraordinary, and involving elements of a kind so incompatible, as to form an exception to the customary integrity and consistency of our author's draughts from nature. But the following passage from the pen of an elegant female writer, will prove, that this curious assemblage of frequently opposite qualities, has existed, and no doubt did exist in the days of Shakspeare:—"It is curious that Shakspeare should, in so singular a character as Cloten, have given the exact prototype of a being whom I once knew. The unmeaning frown of the countenance; the shuffling gait; the burst of voice; the bustling insignificance; the fever and ague fits of valour; the froward tetchiness; the unprincipled malice; and, what is most curious, those occasional gleams of good sense, amidst the floating clouds of folly which generally darkened and confused the man's brain; and which, in the character of Cloten, we are apt to impute to a violation of unity in character; but in the some time Captain C——n, I saw that the portrait of Cloten was not out of nature."*

Poetical justice has been strictly observed in this drama; the vicious characters meet the punishment due to their crimes, while

* Letters of Anna Seward, vol. iii. p. 246.

virtue, in all its various degrees, is proportionably rewarded. The scene of retribution, which is the closing one of the play, is a masterpiece of skill; the developement of the plot, for its fullness, completeness, and ingenuity, surpassing any effort of the kind among our author's contemporaries, and atoning for any partial incongruity which the structure or conduct of the story may have previously displayed.

✓28. MACBETH: 1606. We have now reached what may justly be termed the greatest effort of our author's genius; the most sublime and impressive drama which the world has ever beheld.

Than the conception of the character of Macbeth, it is scarcely possible to conceive a picture more original and grand? Too great and good to fall beneath the common temptations to villany, Shakespeare has called in the powers of supernatural agency, and seizing upon ambition as the vulnerable part of his hero's character, and placing him between the suggestions of hell on one side, and those of his fiend-like wife on the other, he has, in conformity to the letter of the traditions which were before him, brought about a catastrophe, which, as he has conducted it, is the most awful on dramatic record. For, whilst the influence of the world unknown throws a dread solemnity over the principal incidents, the volition of Macbeth remains sufficiently free to enable the poet to bring into full play the strongest passions of the human breast.

Originally brave, magnanimous, humane, and gentle,

—— “not without ambition; but without
The illness should attend it,”

NB

and wishing to do that holily which he would highly; fully sensible also of the enormous ingratitude and guilt which he should incur by the assassination of the monarch who had loaded him with honours, and who was moreover his kinsman and his guest, the struggle would necessarily have terminated on the side of virtue, had not the predictions of the weird sisters, in part, instantly accomplished, and assuming the form therefore of inevitable destiny, concealed from his

bewildered senses the eternal truth, that not from fate, but from his own agency alone could spring the commission of a crime, whose very suggestion had at first filled him with horror. But even this delusion, which seemed for a time to deaden the sense of responsibility, would have failed in its effect, had not the ferocious and sarcastic eloquence of Lady Macbeth been called in to its aid: dazzled by the splendour with which she clothes the expected issue of the deed; indignant at the charge of cowardice, to which she artfully imputes his irresolution, and allured by the means which she has planned as a security from detection, he, at length, rushes into the snare.

No sooner, however, has the assassination of Duncan been perpetrated, than the virtuous principles which had slumbered in the bosom of Macbeth rise up to accuse and condemn him. Conscience-stricken, and recoiling with horror from the atrocity of his own deed, he becomes the victim of the most agonising remorse; he feels deserted both by God and man, and unable even to deprecate the wrath which night and day pursues him:

“ I have done the deed: — Did'st thou not hear a noise? —
 There's one did laugh in his sleep, and one cried, *Murder!*
 That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them. —
 One cried, *God bless us!* and, *Amen!* the other;
 As they had seen me with these hangman's hands
 Listening their fear. I could not say, Amen,
 When they did say, God bless us. —
 But wherefore could not I pronounce, Amen?
 I had most need of blessing, and Amen
 Stuck in my throat. —
 Methought I heard a voice cry, *Sleep no more!*
Macbeth doth murder sleep. —
 Still it cry'd, *Sleep no more!* to all the house;
Glamis hath murder'd sleep; and therefore Cawdor
 Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more.” *

To this dread of vengeance from offended heaven, is soon added

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. x. pp. 110, 111, 112. 114.

the apprehension of punishment from mankind, his keen abhorrence of his own iniquity leading him to paint, in the strongest colours, the detestation and resentment which it must have incurred from others. This fear of retaliation from his fellow-creatures, together with the awful prospect of retribution in another world, produce a complete revolution in his character; he is exhibited distrustful, treacherous, and cruel, sweeping from existence, without pity or hesitation, all whose talents, virtues, sufferings, or pretensions seem to endanger a life, of which, though hourly becoming more wretched and depraved, he anticipates the close with horror and dismay.

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To the very last, the contest is kept up with tremendous energy, between the native vigour of a brave mind, and the debilitating effects of a guilty, and, therefore, a fear-creating conscience. The lesson is, beyond every other, salutary and important, as it proves that the dominion of one perverted passion subjugates to its own depraved purposes the very principles of virtue itself; the sensibility of Macbeth to his own wickedness, giving birth to terrors which urge him on to reiterated murder, and finally to irretrievable destruction.

The management of the fable of Macbeth presents us with a remarkable instance of the profound art of Shakspeare, in condensing into one representation, and with an uninterrupted progress of the action, an extensive and closely concatenated series of events, forming a perfect cycle of influential incidents and passions, on a scale commensurate with that of nature, and for which it were in vain to look, where the unrelaxing unities of time and place have imposed their fetters on the poet. "Let any one, for instance," observes Schlegel, "attempt to circumscribe the gigantic picture of Macbeth's murder, his tyrannical usurpation, and final fall, within the narrow limits of the unity of time, and he will then see, that, however many of the events which Shakspeare successively exhibits before us in such dread array, he may have placed anterior to the commencement of the piece, and made the subject of after recital, he has altogether deprived it of its sublimity of import. This drama, it is true, comprehends a

considerable period of time: but in the rapidity of its progress, have we leisure to calculate this? We see, as it were, the fates weaving their dark web on the bosom of time; and the storm and whirlwind of events, which impel the hero to the first daring attempt, which afterwards lead him to commit innumerable crimes to secure the fruits of it, and drive him at last, amidst numerous perils, to his destruction in the heroic combat, draw us irresistibly along with them. Such a tragical exhibition resembles the course of a comet, which, hardly visible at first, and only important to the astronomic eye, when appearing in the heaven in a nebulous distance, soon soars with an unheard of and perpetually increasing rapidity towards the central point of our system, spreading dismay among the nations of the earth, till in a moment, with its portentous tail, it overspreads the half of the firmament with flaming fire." *

But, in fact, as hath been remarked by the same admirable critic, *Macbeth*, in its construction, bears a striking affinity to the celebrated trilogy of Æschylus, which included the *Agamemnon*, the *Choephoræ*, and the *Eumenides*, or *Furies*, pieces which were successively represented in one day. "The object of the first is the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, on his return from Troy. In the second, Orestes avenges his father by killing his mother: *facto pius et sceleratus eodem*. This deed, although perpetrated from the most powerful motives, is repugnant however to natural and moral order. Orestes as a Prince was, it is true, entitled to exercise justice even on the members of his own family; but he was under the necessity of stealing in disguise into the dwelling of the tyrannical usurper of his throne, and of going to work like an assassin. The memory of his father pleads his excuse; but although Clytemnestra has deserved death, the blood of his mother still rises up in judgment against him. This is represented in the *Eumenides* in the form of a contention among the gods, some of whom approve of the deed of Orestes,

* Lectures on Dramatic Literature, vol. i. pp. 352, 353.

while others persecute him, till at last the divine wisdom, under the figure of Minerva, reconciles the opposite claims, establishes a peace, and puts an end to the long series of crimes and punishments which desolated the royal house of Atreus.

“ A considerable interval takes place between the period of the first and second pieces, during which Orestes grows up to manhood. The second and third are connected together immediately in the order of time. Orestes takes flight after the murder of his mother to Delphi, where we find him at the commencement of the *Eumenides*.

“ In each of the two first pieces, there is a visible reference to the one which follows. In *Agamemnon*, Cassandra and the chorus prophesy, at the close, to the arrogant Clytemnestra and her paramour *Ægisthus*, the punishment which awaits them at the hands of Orestes. In the *Choephoræ*, Orestes, immediately after the execution of the deed, finds no longer any repose; the furies of his mother begin to persecute him, and he announces his resolution of taking refuge in Delphi.

“ The connection is therefore evident throughout, and we may consider the three pieces, which were connected together even in the representation, as so many acts of one great and entire drama. I mention this as a preliminary justification of Shakspeare and other modern poets, in connecting together in one representation a larger circle of human destinies, as we can produce to the critics who object to this the supposed example of the ancients.” *

To these observations of M. Schlegel, the following excellent remarks have been added by a writer in the *Monthly Review* :—
“ Shakspeare’s *Macbeth*,” says this critic, “ bears a close resemblance to this trilogy of *Æschylus*, which gives, in three distinct acts, a history of the house of *Agamemnon*. In *Macbeth*, also, are three acts or deeds, distinct from each other, and separated by long intervals of time; namely, the regicide of Duncan, the murder of

* Lectures on Dramatic Literature, vol. i. pp. 95, 96.

Banquo, and the fall of Macbeth ; the first serving to shew how he attained his elevation, the second how he abused it, and the third how he lost it. A chorus of supernatural beings, (the witches of Shakspeare operate like the furies of Æschylus,) in both these tragic poems, hovers over the fate of the hero ; and, by impressing on the spectator the consciousness of an irresistible necessity, all the extenuation which the atrocities could admit is introduced. Criticism, in comparing the master-pieces of these master-poets, may be permitted to hesitate, but not to draw stakes. To the plot or fable of Shakspeare must be allowed the merit of possessing, in the higher degree, wholeness, connection, and ascending interest. The character of Clytemnestra may be weighed without disparagement against that of Lady Macbeth : but all the other delineations are superior in our Shakspeare ; his characters are more various, more marked, more consistent, more natural, more intuitive. The style of Æschylus, if distinguished for a majestic energetic simplicity, greatly preferable to the mixt metaphors and puns of Shakspeare, has still neither the richness of thought nor the versatility of diction which we find displayed in the English tragedy." *

✓ The *supernatural machinery* of this play, which forms one of its most striking features, is founded on a species of superstition that, during the life-time of Shakspeare, prevailed in England and Scotland in an unprecedented degree. *Witchcraft* had attracted the attention of government under the reign of Henry the Eighth, in whose thirty-third year was enacted a Statute which adjudged all *Witchcraft* and *Sorcery* to be Felony without Benefit of Clergy ; but, at the commencement of the reign of Elizabeth, the evil seems to have been greatly on the increase, for Bishop Jewel, preaching before the Queen, in 1558, tells her,—“ It may please your Grace to understand that Witches and Sorcerers within these few last years are marvelously increased within your Grace’s realm. Your Grace’s

* Monthly Review, vol. lxxxi. p. 119, 120.

subjects pine away, even unto the death, their colour fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their speech is benumbed, their senses are bereft, I pray God they never practise further then upon the subject." * How prevalent the delusion had become in the year 1584, we have the most ample testimony in the ingenious work of Reginald Scot, entitled "The Discoverie of Witchcraft," which was written, as the sensible and humane author has informed us, "in behalfe of the poore, the aged, and the simple †;" and it reflects singular discredit on the age in which it was produced, that a detection so complete, both with regard to argument and fact, should have failed in effecting its purpose. But the infatuation had seized all ranks, with an influence which rivalled that resulting from an article of religious faith, and Scot begins his work with the observation, that "the fables of Witchcraft have taken so fast hold and deepe root in the heart of man, that fewe or none can, now adaies, with patience indure the hand and correction of God. For if any adversitie, greefe, sicknesse, losse of children, corne, cattell, or libertie happen unto them; by and by they exclaime uppon witches;—insomuch as a clap of thunder, or a gale of wind is no sooner heard, but either they run to ring bells, or crie out to burne witches ‡;" and, in his second chapter, he declares "I have heard to my greefe some of the minesterie affirme, that they have had in their parish at one instant, xvij or xviii witches: meaning such as could worke miracles supernaturallie §;" a declaration which, in a subsequent part of his book, he more particularly applies, when he informs us, that "seventeene or eighteene were condemned at once at St. Osees in the countie of Essex, being a whole parish, though of no great quantitie." ||

* Strype's Annals of Reformation, vol. i. p. 8. The apprehension expressed at the close of this quotation, was realised some years afterwards, when a Mrs. Dier was accused of conjuration and witchcraft, because the Queen had been "under excessive anguish *by pains of her teeth*: insomuch that she took no rest for divers nights."—Vide Strype's Annals, vol. iv. p. 7.

† Epistle to Sir Roger Manwood, p. 1.

‡ Discoverie of Witchcraft, chap. i. pp. 1, 2. § Ibid. p. 4.

|| Discourse of Divels and Spirits, p. 543.; annexed to the Discoverie of Witchcraft.

The mischief, however, was but in progress, and received a rapid acceleration from the publication of the "Dæmonologie" of King James, at Edinburgh, in the year 1597. The origin of this very curious treatise was probably laid in the royal mind, in consequence of the supposed detection of a conspiracy of two hundred witches with Dr. Fian, "Register to the Devil," at their head, to bewitch and drown His Majesty, on his return from Denmark, in 1590. James attended the examination of these poor wretches with the most eager curiosity, and the most willing credulity; and, when Agnis Tompson confessed, that she, with other witches to the number just mentioned, "went altogether by sea, each one in her riddle, or sieve, with flaggons of wine, making merry and drinking by the way, to the kirk of North Berwick, in Lothian, where, when they had landed, they took hands and danced, singing all with one voice, —

"Commer * go ye before, commer goe yè,
Gif ye will not go before, commer let me:"

and "that Geilis Duncane did go before them, playing said reel on a Jew's trump," James immediately sent for Duncane, and listened with delight to his performance of the witches' reel on the Jew's-harp!

On Agnis, however, asserting, that the Devil had met them at the Kirk, His Majesty could not avoid expressing some doubts; when, taking him aside, she "declared unto him the very words which had passed between him and his Queen on the first night of their marriage, with their answer each to other; whereat the King wondered greatly, and swore by the living God, that he believed all the Devils in Hell could not have discovered the same."†

That the particulars elicited from the confessions of these unfortu-

* Gossip.

† These extracts are taken from a pamphlet entitled, "Newes from Scotland," reprinted in the *Gent. Magazine*, vol. xlix. p. 449. See also *Gent. Magazine*, vol. vii. p. 556.

nate beings, which, it is said, "made the King in a wonderful admiration," formed the basis of the *Dæmonologie*, may be, therefore, readily admitted. It is also to be deplored, that, weak and absurd as this production now appears to us, its effects on the age of its birth, and for a century afterwards, were extensive, and melancholy in the extreme. It contributed, indeed, more than any other work on the subject, to rivet the fetters of credulity; and scarcely had a twelvemonth elapsed from its publication, before its result was visible in the destruction, in Scotland, of not less than six hundred human beings at once, for this imaginary crime! *

The succession of James to the throne of Elizabeth served but to propagate the contagion; for no sooner had he reached this country, than his *Dæmonologie* re-appeared from an English press, being printed at London, in 1603, in quarto, and with a Preface to the Reader, which commences by informing him of "the fearefull abounding at this time in this Countrey, of these detestable slaves of the Diuel, the Witches, or enchanters †;" a declaration which, during the course of the same year, was accompanied by a new statute against Witches, one clause of which enacts, that "Any one that shall use, practise, or exercise any invocation or conjuration of any evill or wicked spirit, or consult, covenant with, entertaine or employ, feede or reward, any evill or wicked spirit, to or for any intent or purpose; or take up any dead man, woman or child, out of his, her, or their grave, or any other place where the dead body resteth, or the skin, bone, or other part of any dead person, to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charme, or enchantment; or shall use, practise, or exercise any witchcraft, enchantment, charme, or sorcery, whereby any person shall be killed, destroyed, wasted, consumed, pined, or lamed, in his or her body,

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Hear

* See Nashe's *Lenten Stuff*, 1599, as quoted by Mr. Reed, in his *Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 5. note.

† King James's Works, as published by James, Bishop of Winton, folio, 1616, p. 91.

or any part thereof, such offenders, duly and lawfully convicted and attainted, shall suffer death." *

We cannot wonder if measures such as these, which stamped the already existing superstitions with the renewed authority of the law, and with the influence of regal argument and authority, should render a belief in the existence of witchcraft almost universal; fashion and interest on the one hand, and ignorance and fear on the other, mutually contributing, by concealing or banishing doubt, to disseminate error, and preclude detection.

Who those were who, at this period, had the misfortune to be branded with the appellation of Witches; what deeds were imputed to them, and what was the nature of their supposed compact with the Devil, are questions which will be most satisfactorily answered in the words of Reginald Scot, whose book is not only extremely scarce, but highly curious and entertaining; and two or three chapters from this copious treasury of superstition, with a very few comments from other sources, will exhaust this part of the subject.

"The sort of such as are said to be witches," writes Scot, "are women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eied, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles; poore, sullen, superstitious, and papists; or such as knowe no religion; in whose drousie minds the divell hath gotten a fine seat; so as, what mischeefe, mischance, calamitie, or slaughter is brought to passe, they are easilie persuaded the same is doone by themselves; imprinting in their minds an earnest and constant imagination thereof. They are leane and deformed, shewing melancholie in their faces, to the horror of all that see them. They are doting, scolds, mad, divelish, and not much differing from them that are thought to be possessed with spirits; so firme and stedfast in their opinions, as whosoever shall onelie have respect to the

* This act against witches was not repealed until the year 1736, being the ninth of George the Second!

Reliance of
witches

constancie of their words uttered, would easilie beleeeve they were true indeed.

“ These miserable wretches are so odious unto all their neighbors, and so feared, as few dare offend them, or denie them anie thing they aske: whereby they take upon them; yea, and sometimes thinke, that they can doo such things as are beyond the abilitie of humane nature. These go from house to house, and from doore to doore for a pot full of milke, yest, drinke, pottage, or some such releefe; without the which they could hardlie live: neither obtaining for their service and paines, nor by their art, nor yet at the divels hands (with whome they are said to make a perfect and visible bargain) either beautie, monie, promotion, welth, worship, pleasure, honor, knowledge, learning, or any other benefit whatsoever.

“ It falleth out many times, that neither their necessities, nor their expectation is answered or served, in those places where they beg or borrowe; but rather their lewdness is by their neighbors reproved. And further, in tract of time the witch wareth odious and tedious to her neighbors; and they againe are despised and despited of hir; so as sometimes she cursseth one, and sometimes another; and that from the maister of the house, his wife, children, cattell, &c. to the little pig that lieth in the stie. Thus in processe of time they have all displeased hir, and she hath wished evil luck unto them all; perhaps with cursses and imprecations made in forme. Doubtless (at length) some of hir neighbors die, or falle sicke; or some of their children are visited with diseases that ver them strangelie: as apoplexies, epilepsies, convulsions, hot fevers, wormes, &c. Which by ignorant parents are supposed to be the vengeance of witches. Yea and their opinions and conceits are confirmed and maintained by unskilfull physicians: according to the common saieng; *Inscitiæ pallium maleficium et incantatio*, Witchcraft and inchantment is the cloke of ignorance: whereas indeed evill humors, and not strange words, witches, or spirits are the causes of such diseases. Also some of their cattell perish, either by disease or mischance. Then they, uppon whom such adversities fall, weighing the fame that goeth upon

this woman (hir words, displeasure, and curses meeting so justly with their misfortune) doo not onlie conceive, but also are resolved, that all their mishaps are brought to passe by hir onelie means.

“ The witch on the other side expecting hir neighbors mischances, and seeing things sometimes come to passe according to hir wishes, curses, and incantations (for Bodin himself confesseth, that not above two in a hundred of their witchings or wishings take effect) being called before a Justice, by due examination of the circumstances is driven to see hir imprecations and desires, and hir neighbors harmes and losses to concur, and as it were to take effect: and so confesseth that she (as a goddes) hath brought such things to passe. Wherein, not onlie she, but the accuser, and also the Justice are fowlie deceived and abused; as being thorough hir confession and other circumstances persuaded (to the injurie of Gods glorie) that she hath doone, or can doo that which is proper onelie to God himselfe.

“ Another sort of witches there are, which be absolutelie cooseners: These take upon them, either for glorie, fame, or gaine, to doo any thing, which God or the divell can doo: either for fortelling things to come, bewraieng of secrets, curing of maladies, or working of miracles.”*

To this chapter from Scot, which we have given entire, may be added the admirable description of the abode of a witch from the pen of Spenser, who, as Warton hath observed, copied from living objects, and had probably been struck with seeing such a cottage, in which a witch was supposed to live:—

“ There in a gloomy hollow glen she found
A little cottage built of stickes and reedes
In homely wise, and wald with sods around;
In which a Witch did dwell, in loathly weedes
And wilful want, all carelesse of her needes;
So choosing solitarie to abide
Far from all neighbours, that her divelish deedes
And hellish arts from people she might hide,
And hurt far off unknowne whomever she envide.”†

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, book i. chap. 3. pp. 7—9.

† Todd's Spenser, vol. iv. pp. 480, 481. Faerie Queene, book iii. canto 7. stanza 6. and note.

This very striking picture for ever fixed the character of the habitation allotted to a witch; thus in a singularly curious tract, entitled "Round about our Coal-Fire," published about the close of the seventeenth century, and which details, in a pleasing manner, the traditions of the olden time, as a source of Christmas amusement, it is said that "a Witch must be a hagged old woman, living in a little rotten cottage, under a hill, by a wood-side, and must be frequently spinning at the door: she must have a black cat, two or three broom-sticks, an imp or two, and two or three diabolical teats to suckle her imps."

Of the wonderful feats which the various kinds of witches were supposed capable of performing, Scot has favoured us with the following succinct enumeration: there are three sorts of witches he tells us, "one sort can hurt and not helpe, the second can helpe and not hurt, the third can both helpe and hurt. Among the hurtfull witches there is one sort more beastlie than any kind of beasts, saving wolves: for these usually devour and eate yong children and infants of their owne kind. These be they that raise haile, tempests, and hurtfull weather; as lightening, thunder, &c. These be they that procure barrennesse in man, woman, and beast. These can throwe children in waters, as they walke with their mothers, and not be seene. These can make horssees kicke, till they cast their riders. These can passe from place to place in the aire invisible. These can so alter the mind of judges, that they can have no power to hurt them. These can procure to themselves and to others, taciturnitie and insensibilitie in their torments. These can bring trembling to the hands, and strike terror into the minds of them that apprehend them. These can manifest unto others, things hidden and lost, and foreshew things to come; and see them as though they were present. These can alter men's minds to inordinate love or hate. These can kill whom they list with lightening and thunder. These can take away man's courage.—These can make a woman miscarrie in childbirth, and destroye the child in the mother's wombe, without any sensible

these are the
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means either inwardlie or outwardlie applied. These can with their looks kill either man or beast. —

“ Others doo write, that they can pull downe the moone and the starres. Some write that with wishing they can send needles into the livers of their enemies. Some that they can transferre corne in the blade from one place to another. Some, that they can cure diseases supernaturallie, flie in the aire, and danse with divels. Some write, that they can plaie the part of *Succubus*, and contract themselves to *Incubus*. — Some saie they can transubstantiate themselves and others, and take the forms and shapes of asses, wolues, ferrets, cowes, asses, horssees, hogs, &c. Some say they can keepe divels and spirits in the likenesse of todes and cats.

“ They can raise spirits (as others affirme), drie up springs, turne the course of running waters, inhibit the sune, and staie both day and night, changing the one into the other. They can go in and out at awger holes, and saile in an egge shell, a cockle or muscle shell, through and under the tempestuous seas. — They can bring soules out of the graves. They can teare snakes in pieces. — They can also bring to pass, that chearne as long as you list, your butter will not come; *especiallie, if either the maids have eaten up the creame; or the good-wife have sold the butter before in the market.*” *

The only material accession which the royal James has made to this curious catalogue of the deeds of witchcraft, consists in informing us, that these aged and decrepid slaves of Satan “ make pictures of waxe or clay, that by the roasting thereof, the persons that they beare the name of, may be continually melted or dried away by continuall sicknesse †;” and his mode of explaining how the devil performs this marvel, is a notable instance both of his ingenuity and his eloquence. This deed he says “ is verie possible to their master to performe: for although that instrument of waxe have no vertue in that turne doing, yet may he not very well, even by the

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, book i. chap. 4. pp. 9—11.

† James's Works, by Winton, p. 116.

same measure, that his conjured slaves melts that waxe at the fire, may hee not, I say, at these same times, subtilly, as a spirit, so weaken and scatter the spirits of life of the patient, as may make him on the one part, for faintnesse, to sweat out the humour of his bodie, and on the other part, for the not concurrence of these spirits, which causes his digestion, so debilitate his stomache, that this humour radicall continually, sweating out on the one part, and no newe good sucke being put in the place thereof, for lacke of digestion on the other, he at last shall vanish away, even as his picture will doe at the fire? And that knavish and cunning workeman, by troubling him, onely at sometimes, makes a proportion, so neere betwixt the working of the one and the other, that both shall end as it were at one time." *

It remains to notice the nature of the compact or bargain, which witches were believed to enter into with their seducer, and the species of homage which they were compelled to pay him; and here again we must have recourse to Scot, not only as the most compressed, but as the most authentic detailer of this strange credulity of his times. "The order of their bargain or profession," says he, "is double; the one solemne and publike; the other secret and private. That which is called solemne or publike, is where witches come together at certaine assemblies, at the times prefixed, and doo not onelie see the divell in visible forme; but confer and talke familiarlie with him. In which conference the divell exhorteth them to observe their fidelitie unto him, promising them long life and prosperitie. Then the witches assembled, commend a new disciple (whom they call a novice) unto him: and if the divell find that yoong witch apt and forward in renunciation of christian faith, in despising anie of the seven sacraments, in treading upon crosses, in spetting at the time of the elevation, in breaking their fast on fasting daies, and fasting on sundaies: then the divell giveth foorth his hand, and the novice

* James's Works, by Winton, p. 117.

joining hand in hand with him, promiseth to observe and keepe all the diuels commandements.

“ This doone, the divell beginneth to be more bold with hir, telling hir plainlie, that all this will not serve his turne ; and therefore requireth homage at hir hands : yea he also telleth hir, that she must grant him both hir bodie and soule to be tormented in everlasting fire ; which she yeeldeth unto. Then he chargeth hir, to procure as manie men, women, and children also, as she can, to enter into this societie. Then he teacheth them to make ointments of the bowels and members of children, whereby they ride in the aire, and accomplish all their desires. So as, if there be anie children unbaptized, or not garded with the signe of the crosse, or orisons ; then the witches may and doo catch them from their mothers sides in the night, or out of their cradles, or otherwise kill them with their ceremonies ; and after buriall steale them out of their graves, and seeth them in a caldron, until their flesh be made potable. Of the thickest whereof they make ointments, whereby they ride in the aire ; but the thinner potion they put into flaggons, whereof whosoever drinketh, observing certaine ceremonies, immediatelie becommeth a maister or rather a mistresse in that practise and facultie.

“ Their homage with their oth and bargaine is received for a certeine terme of yeares ; sometimes for ever. Sometimes it consisteth in the deniall of the whole faith, sometimes in part. — And this is doone either by oth, protestation of words, or by obligation in writing, sometimes sealed with wax, sometimes signed with blood, sometimes by kissing the diuels bare buttocks.

“ You must also understand, that after they have delicatlie banquetted with the divell and the ladie of the fairies ; and have eaten up a fat oxe, and emptied a butt of malmesie, and a binne of bread at some noble man’s house, in the dead of the night, nothing is missed of all this in the morning. For the ladie *Sibylla*, *Minerva*, or *Diana* with a golden rod striketh the vessel and the binne, and they are fully replenished againe.” After mentioning that the bullock is

restored in the same magical manner, he states it as an "infallible rule, that everie fortnight, or at the least everie moneth, each witch must kill one child at the least for hir part." He also relates from Bodin, that "at these magicall assemblies, the witches never faile to danse, and whiles they sing and danse, everie one hath a broome in hir hand, and holdeth it up aloft." *

To these circumstances attending the meetings of this unhallowed sisterhood, King James adds, that Satan, in order that "hee may the more vively counterfeit and scorne God, oft times makes his slaves to conveene in those very places, which are destinate and ordained for the conveening of the servants of God (I meane by churches):—further, witches oft times confesse, not only his conveening in the church with them, but his occupying of the pulpit." † For this piece of information James seems to have been indebted to the confessions of Agnis Tompson; but he also relates, that the devil, as soon as he has induced his votaries to renounce their God and baptism, "gives them his marke upon some secret place of their bodie, which remaies soare unhealed, whilst his next meeting with them, and thereafter ever insensible, however it be nipped or pricked by any;" a seal of distinction which, he tells us at the close of his treatise, is of great use in detecting them on their trial, as "the finding of their marke, and the trying the insensiblenes thereof," was considered as a positive proof of their craft. His Majesty, however, proceeds to mention another mode of ascertaining their guilt, terminating the paragraph in a manner not very flattering to his female subjects, or very expressive of his own gallantry. "The other is," he tells us, "their fleeting on the water: for as in a secret murther, if the dead carkasse bee at any time thereafter handled by the murtherer, it will gush out of blood, as if the blood were crying to the heaven for revenge of the murtherer, God having appointed

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, book iii. chap. 1, 2. pp. 40—42.

† Works apud Winton, pp. 112, 113.

that secret supernaturall signe, for triall of that secret unnaturall crime, so it appeares that God hath appointed (for a supernaturall signe of the monstrous impietie of Witches) that the water shall refuse to receive them in her bosome, that have shaken off them the sacred water of Baptisme, and wilfully refused the benefite thereof: No, not so much as their eyes are able to shed teares (threaten and torture them as you please) while first they repent (God not permitting them to dissemble their obstinacie in so horrible a crime) albeit the women-kind especially, be able otherwayes to shed teares at every light occasion when they will, yea, although it were dissemblingly like the Crocodiles." *

Such are the chief features of this gross superstition, as detailed by the writers of the period in which it most prevailed in this country. *Scot* has taken infinite pains in collecting, from every writer on the subject, the *minutiæ* of Witchcraft, and his book is expanded to a thick quarto, in consequence of his commenting at large on the particulars which he had given in his initiatory chapters, for the purpose of their complete refutation and exposure; a work of great labour, and which shows, at every step, how deeply this credulity had been impressed on the subjects of Elizabeth. *James*, on the other hand, though a man of considerable erudition, and, in some respects, of shrewd good sense, wrote in defence of this folly, and, unfortunately for truth and humanity, the doctrine of the monarch was preferred to that of the sage.

When such was the creed of the country, from the throne to the cottage; when even the men of learning, with few † exceptions, ranged themselves on the side of the *Dæmonologie*, it was highly judicious in Shakspeare, in his dramatic capacity, to adopt, as a powerful instrument of terror, the popular belief; popular both in his

* King James's Works apud Winton, pp. 111. 135, 136.

† Among these we find the mighty name of Bacon; this great man attributing, in the Tenth Century of his Natural History, the achievements and the confessions of witches and wizards to the effects of a morbid imagination.

own time, and in that to which the reign of Macbeth is * referred. And, in doing this, he has shown not less taste than genius ; for in the principal authorities to which he has had recourse for particulars ; in the *Discoverie of Scot*, in the *Dæmonologie* of James, and even in the *Witch of Middleton*, a play now allowed to have been anterior to his own drama, the ludicrous and the frivolous are blended, in a very large proportion, with that which is calculated to excite solemnity and awe. With exquisite skill has he separated the latter from the former, exalting it with so many touches of grandeur, and throwing round it such an air of dreadful mystery, that, although the actual superstition on which the machinery is founded, be no more, there remains attached to it, in consequence of passing through the mind of Shakspeare, such a portion of what is naturally inherent in the human mind, in relation to its apprehensions of the invisible world of spirits, such a sublime, though indistinct conception of powers unknown and mightier far than we, that nearly the same degree of grateful terror is experienced from the perusal or representation of *Macbeth* in modern days, as was felt in the age of its production.

In the very first appearance, indeed, of the Weird Sisters to Macbeth and Banquo on the blasted heath, we discern beings of a more awful and spiritualised character than belongs to the vulgar herd of witches. “What are these,” exclaims the astonished Banquo, —

“What are these,
So wither'd, and so wild in their attire ;
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,
And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught

* To the traditions of Boethius and Holinshed, we may add a modern authority in the person of Sir John Sinclair, who tells us that “In Macbeth's time, Witchcraft was very prevalent in Scotland, and two of the most famous witches in the kingdom lived on each hand of Macbeth, one at Collace, the other not far from Dunsinnan House, at a place called the Cape. Macbeth applied to them for advice, and by their counsel built a lofty Castle upon the top of an adjoining hill, since called Dunsinnan. The moor where the Witches met, which is in the parish of St. Martin's, is yet pointed out by the country-people, and there is a stone still preserved which is called *the Witches Stone*.”—Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. xx. p. 242.

That man may question? You seem to understand me,
By each at once her choppy finger laying
Upon her skinny lips: —

Macb. Speak, I charge you.

Banq. The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,
And these are of them: — Whither are they vanish'd?

Macb. Into the air; and what seem'd corporal, melted
As breath into the wind."

Even when unattended by any human witnesses, when supporting the dialogue merely among themselves, Shakspeare has placed in the mouths of these agents imagery and diction of a cast so peculiar and mysterious, as to render them objects of alarm and fear, emotions incompatible with any tendency towards the ludicrous. But when, wheeling round the magic cauldron, in the gloomy recesses of their cave, they commence their incantations, chanting in tones wild and unearthly, and heard only during the intervals of a thunder-storm, their metrical charm, while flashes of subterranean fire obscurely light their haggard features, their language seems to breathe of hell, and we shrink back, as from beings at war with all that is good. Yet is the impression capable of augmentation, and is felt to have attained its acmé of sublimity and horror, when, in reply to the question of Macbeth,

"How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags?
What is't you do?"

they reply, —

"*A deed without a name.*"

Much, however, of the dread, solemnity, and awe which is experienced in reading this play, from the intervention of the witches, is lost in its representation on the stage, owing to the injudicious custom of bringing them too forward on the scene; where, appearing little better than a group of old women, the effect intended by the poet is not only destroyed, but reversed. Their dignity and grandeur must arise, as evil beings gifted with superhuman powers, from the unde-

representation of
the supernatural

fined nature both of their agency and of their external forms. Were they indistinctly seen, though audible, at a distance, and, as it were, through a hazy twilight, celebrating their orgies, and with shadowy and gigantic shape flitting between the pale blue flames of their cauldron and the eager eye of the spectator, sufficient latitude would be given to the imagination, and the finest drama of our author would receive in the theatre that deep tone of supernatural horror with which it is felt to be so highly imbued in the solitude of the closet.

CHAPTER XII.

OBSERVATIONS ON *JULIUS CÆSAR*; ON *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*; ON *CORIOLANUS*; ON *THE WINTER'S TALE*; ON *THE TEMPEST*; DISSERTATION ON THE GENERAL RELIEF OF THE TIMES IN THE *ART OF MAGIC*, AND ON SHAKSPEARE'S MANAGEMENT OF THIS SUPERSTITION, AS EXHIBITED IN *THE TEMPEST* — OBSERVATIONS ON *OTHELLO*; ON *TWELFTH NIGHT*, AND ON THE PLAYS ASCRIBED TO SHAKSPEARE — SUMMARY OF SHAKSPEARE'S DRAMATIC CHARACTER.

THE Roman tragedy of Shakspeare, including the three pieces of *Julius Cæsar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*, exhibit the poet under a new aspect. We have seen him dramatise the annals of his own country with matchless skill and effect; we have beheld him touching with a discriminative pencil the heroes of ancient Greece, and he now brings before us, clothed in the majesty of republican greatness, or surrounded with the splendour of illimitable power, the most illustrious patriots and warriors of the Roman world.

The task of combining a faithful adhesion to the records of history with that grandeur and freedom of conception which characterise the unfettered poet, could alone have been achieved by the genius of Shakspeare. He has, accordingly, not only fixed his scene at Rome, during the days of Coriolanus or of Cæsar, but he has resuscitated the manners and the modes of thinking of their respective ages. We enter with enthusiasm into the characters and fortunes of these masters of the civilised globe, and the patriotism and martial glory, the very feelings and public life of the eternal city again start into existence.

The chronology of these three plays having been ascertained with as much probability, as the subject will admit, it is only necessary to observe, as a preliminary remark, that the dates of the first and second are adopted from Mr. Malone, and that of the third from Mr. Chalmers; and to these critics the reader is referred for facts and

inferences which, not being susceptible as we conceive of further extension or improvement, it would be useless here to repeat.

29. JULIUS CÆSAR: 1607. Of this tragedy Brutus is the principal and most interesting character, and to the developement of his motives, and to the result of his actions, is the greater part of the play appropriated; for it is not the fall of Cæsar, but that of Brutus, which constitutes the catastrophe. Cæsar is introduced indeed expressing that characteristic confidence in himself, which has been ascribed to him by history; and his influence over those who surround him, the effect of high mental powers and unrivalled military success, is represented as very great; but he takes little part in the business of the scene, and his assassination occurs at the commencement of the third act.

While the conqueror of the world is thus in some degree thrown into the shade, Brutus, the favourite of the poet, is brought forward, not only adorned with all the virtues attributed to him by Plutarch, but, in order to excite a deeper interest in his favour, and to prove, that not jealousy, ambition, or revenge, but unalloyed patriotism was the sole director of his conduct, our author has drawn him as possessing the utmost sweetness and gentleness of disposition, sympathising with all that suffer, and unwilling to inflict pain but from motives of the strongest moral necessity. He has most feelingly and beautifully painted him in the relations of a master, a friend, and a husband; his kindness to his domestics, his attachment to his friends, and his love for Portia, to whom he declares, that she is

“ As dear to him, as are the ruddy drops
That visit his sad heart,”

demonstrating, that nothing but a high sense of public duty could have induced him to lift his hand against the life of Cæsar.

It is this struggle between the humanity of his temper and his ardent and hereditary love of liberty, now threatened with extinction by the despotism of Cæsar, that gives to Brutus that grandeur of character and that predominancy over his associates in purity of

intention, which secured to him the admiration of his contemporaries, and to which posterity has done ample justice through the medium of Shakspeare, who has placed the virtues of Brutus, and the contest in his bosom between private regard and patriotic duty, in the noblest light; wringing even from the lips of his bitterest enemy, the fullest eulogium on the rectitude of his principles, and the goodness of his heart: —

“ *Ant.* This was the noblest Roman of them all:
All the conspirators, save only he,
Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar;
He, only, in a general honest thought,
And common good to all, made one of them.
His life was gentle; and the elements
So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up,
And say to all the world, *This was a man!*” *

In the conduct and action of this drama, though closely pursuing the occurrences and characters as detailed by Plutarch in his life of Brutus, there is a great display of ingenuity, and much mechanism in the concentration of the events, producing that integrity and unity, which, without any modification of the truth of history, moulds a small portion of an immense chain of incidents into a perfect and satisfactory whole. The formation of the conspiracy, the death of the dictator, the harangue of Antony and its effects, the flight of Brutus and Cassius, their quarrel and reconciliation, and finally their noble stand for liberty against the sanguinary and atrocious triumvirate, are concatenated with the most happy art; and though, after the fall of Cæsar, nothing but the patriotic heroism of Brutus and Cassius is left to occupy the stage, the apprehensions and the interest which have been awakened for their fate, are sustained, and even augmented to the last scene of the tragedy.

30. ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA: 1608. Shakspeare has here spread a wider canvas; he has admitted a vast variety of groups, some of

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xvi. p. 422.

which are crowded, and some too isolated, whilst in the back ground are dimly seen personages and events that, for the sake of perspicuity, ought to have been brought forward with some share of boldness and relief. The subject, in fact, is too complex and extended, to admit of a due degree of simplicity and wholeness, and the mind is consequently hurried by a multiplicity of incidents, for whose introduction and succession we are not sufficiently prepared.

Yet, notwithstanding these defects, this is a piece which gratifies us by its copiousness and animation ; such, indeed, is the variety of its transactions, and the rapidity of its transitions, that the attention is never suffered, even for a moment, to grow languid ; and, though occasionally surprised by abruptness, or want of connection, pursues the footsteps of the poet with eager and unabated delight.

Neither is the merit of this play exclusively founded on the vivacity and entertainment of its fable ; it presents us with three characters which start from their respective groups with a prominence, with a depth of light and shade, that gives the freshness of existing energy to the records of far distant ages.

The martial but voluptuous Antony, whose bosom is the seat of great qualities and great vices ; now magnanimous, enterprising, and heroic ; now weak, irresolute, and slothful ; alternately the slave of ambition and of effeminacy, yet generous, open-hearted, and unsuspecting, is strikingly opposed to the cold-blooded and selfish Octavius. The keeping of these characters is sustained to the last, whilst Cleopatra, the mistress of every seductive and meretricious art, a compound of vanity, sensuality, and pride, adored by the former, and despised by the latter, an instrument of ruin to the one, and of greatness to the other, is decorated, as to personal charms and exterior splendour, with all that the most lavish imagination can bestow.

31. CORIOLANUS: 1609. This play, which refers us to the third century of the Republic, is of a very peculiar character, involving in its course a large intermixture of humorous and political matter. It affords us a picture of what may be termed a Roman electioneering mob ; and the insolence of newly-acquired authority on the part of

the tribunes, and the ungovernable licence and malignant ribaldry of the plebeians, are forcibly, but naturally expressed. The popular anarchy, indeed, is rendered highly diverting through the intervention of Menenius Agrippa, whose sarcastic wit, and shrewd good sense, have lent to these turbulent proceedings a very extraordinary degree of interest and effect. His "pretty tale," as he calls it, of *the belly and the members*, which he recites to the people, during their mutiny occasioned by the dearth of corn, is a delightful and improved expansion of the old apologue, originally attributed to Menenius by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, but taken immediately by Shakspeare from Plutarch's Life of Coriolanus, and from Camden's Remains.

The serious and elevated persons of the drama are delineated in colours of equal, if not superior strength. The unrivalled military prowess of Coriolanus, in whose nervous arm, "Death, that dark spirit," dwelt; the severe sublimity of his character, his stern and unbending hauteur, and his undisguised contempt of all that is vulgar, pusillanimous, and base, are brought before us with a raciness and power of impression, and, notwithstanding a very liberal use both of the sentiments and language of his Plutarch, with a freedom of outline which, even in Shakspeare, may be allowed to excite our astonishment.*

Among the female characters, a very important part is necessarily attached to the person of Volumnia; the fate of Rome itself depending upon her parental influence and authority. The poet has accordingly done full justice to the great qualities which the Cheronean sage has ascribed to this energetic woman; the daring loftiness of her spirit, her bold and masculine eloquence, and, above all, her patriotic

* The representation of the character of Coriolanus by Mr. Kemble, which realises the very conception of the poet, and which in spirit, manner, and costume, can scarcely be deemed susceptible of improvement, has rendered this drama very popular in our own day.

devotion, being marked by the most spirited and vigorous touches of his pencil.

The numerous vicissitudes in the story ; its rapidity of action ; its contrast of character ; the splendid vigour of its serious, and the satirical sharpness and relish of its more familiar scenes, together with the animation which prevails throughout all its parts, have conferred on this play, both in the closet, and on the stage, a remarkable degree of attraction.

32. THE WINTER'S TALE: 1610. That this play was written after the accession of King James, appears probable from the following lines : —

—— “ If I could find example
Of thousands, that had struck anointed kings
And *flourished after*, I'd not do't ; but since
Nor brass, nor stone, nor parchment, bears not one,
Let villany itself forswear it.” *

“ If, as Mr. Blackstone supposes,” observes Mr. Douce, “ this be an allusion to the death of the Queen of Scots, it exhibits Shakspeare in the character of a cringing flatterer, accommodating himself to existing circumstances, and is moreover an extremely severe one. But the perpetrator of that atrocious murder *did flourish* many years afterwards. May it not rather be designed as a compliment to King James, on his escape from the Gowrie conspiracy, an event often brought to the people's recollection during his reign, from the day on which it happened being made a day of thanksgiving?” †

Thus Osborne tells us, that “ amongst a number of other Novelties, he (King James) brought a *new Holyday* into the Church of England, *wherein God had publick thanks given him for his Majesties deliverance out of the hands of E. Goury*. And this fell out upon Aug. 5 ‡ ;” and from Wilson we learn, the title which this day bore in the almanacks of the time : — “ The fifth of August this year (1603)

* Winter's Tale, act i. sc. 2. † Illustrations, vol. i. p. 347.

‡ Osborne's Works, 9th edit. 8vo. 1689, p. 477.

had a new title given to it. *The Kings Deliveries in the North* must resound here." *

From an allusion to this play and to *The Tempest*, in Ben Jonson's Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*, 1614, there is some reason to conclude, that these dramas were written within a short period of each other, and that *The Winter's Tale* was the elder of the two. "He is loth," he says, "to make nature afraid in his plays, like those that beget *Tales, Tempests*, and such like drolleries." † Now, it will be found in the next article, that we have no trifling *data* for attributing the composition of *The Tempest* to the year 1611; and, could it be rendered highly probable, that the production of *The Winter's Tale* did not occur *before* 1610, an almost incontrovertible support would be given to our chronology of both plays. It happens, therefore, very fortunately, that in a note by Mr. Malone, annexed to his chronological notice of *The Winter's Tale*, in the edition of our author's plays of 1803, a piece of information occurs, that seems absolutely to prove the very fact of which we are in search. It appears, says this critic, from the entry which has been quoted in a preceding page, that *The Winter's Tale* "had been originally licensed by Sir George Buck;" and he concludes by remarking, that "though Sir George Buck obtained a reversionary grant of the office of Master of the Revels, in 1603, which title Camden has given him in the edition of his *Britannia* printed in 1607, it appears from various documents in the Pells-office, that he did not get complete possession of his place till August, 1610." ‡ In fact, Edmond Tilney, the predecessor of Sir George Buck, died at the very commencement of October, 1610, and was buried at Leatherhead, in Surrey, on the sixth of the same month; and it is very likely that, during his illness, probably

* History of Great Britain, folio, 1653, p. 12.

† "I am inclined to think," says Mr. Malone, "that he (Jonson) joined these plays in the same censure, in consequence of their having been produced at no great distance of time from each other."—Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. ii. p. 326. note. That this passage was intended, however, as a censure on *Shakspeare* remains doubtful.

‡ Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. ii. p. 326.

commencing in August, Sir George, as his destined successor, might officiate for him.

We learn from Mr. Vertue's manuscripts, that *The Winter's Tale* was acted at court in 1613, a circumstance which, though it may lead us to infer that its popularity on the public stage had been considerable, by no means necessarily warrants the supposition which Mr. Malone is inclined to make, that it had passed through all its stages of composition, public performance, and court exhibition, during the same year.

Instead, therefore, of conjecturing with Mr. Malone that this play was written in 1594, or 1602, or 1604, or 1613, for such has been the vacillation of this gentleman in his chronology of the piece, or, with Mr. Chalmers, in 1601, we believe it to have been *written*, for the reasons which we have already assigned, and which will receive additional corroboration from the arguments to be adduced under the next head, towards the close of 1610, and to have been *licensed* and *performed* during the succeeding year. *

"The observation by Dr. Warburton," remarks Mr. Douce, "that *The Winter's Tale*, with all its absurdities, is very entertaining, though stated by Dr. Johnson to be just, must be allowed at the same time to be extremely frigid." Certainly had Warburton said this, or nothing but this, he had merited the epithet; but Mr. Douce has been misled by Dr. Johnson, for most assuredly Warburton has not said this, but, on the contrary, has spoken of the play not only with taste and feeling, but in a tone of enthusiasm. "This play, *throughout*," says he, "is written *in the very spirit of its author*. And in telling this homely and simple, though agreeable country-tale,

"Our sweetest Shakspeare, fancy's child,
Warbles his native wood-notes wild."

"This was necessary to observe in mere justice to the play: as

* It appears, from Mr. Malone, that the copy of *The Winter's Tale*, licensed by Sir George Buck, had been lost.—Vide Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. ii. p. 326. note.

the meanness of the fable, and the extravagant conduct of it, had misled some of great name into a wrong judgment of its merit; which, *as far as it regards sentiment and character, is scarce inferior to any in the whole collection.*"* This, indeed, is all that Warburton has said on the general character of *The Winter's Tale*, but it is high praise, and coincides in almost every respect with what Mr. Douce has himself very justly declared on the same subject, when, in the passage immediately following that which we have already quoted from his *Illustrations*, he adds,—“In point of fine writing it may be ranked among Shakspeare's best efforts. The absurdities pointed at by Warburton, together with the whimsical anachronisms of Whitson pastorals, Christian burial, an emperor of Russia, and an Italian painter of the fifteenth century, are no real drawbacks on the superlative merits of this charming drama. The character of Perdita will remain for ages unrivalled; for where shall such language be found as she is made to utter?”†

As Shakspeare was indebted for the story of *The Winter's Tale* to the *Dorastus and Fawnia* of Robert Greene, which was published in 1588, so it is probable that he was under a similar obligation for its name to “A booke entitled *A Wynter Nyght's Pastime*,” which was entered at Stationers' Hall on May the 22d, 1594. It is, also, not unlikely that the adoption of the title might influence the nature of the composition; for, as Schlegel has remarked, “*The Winter's Tale* is as appropriately named as *The Midsummer-Night's Dream*. It is one of those tales which are peculiarly calculated to beguile the dreary leisure of a long winter evening, which are even attractive and intelligible to childhood, and which, animated by fervent truth in the delineation of character and passion, invested with the decoration of a poetry lowering itself, as it were, to the simplicity of the subject, transport even manhood back to the golden age of imagination.”‡

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ix. p. 209.

† *Illustrations of Shakspeare*, vol. i. p. 364.

‡ *Lectures on Dramatic Literature*, vol. ii. p. 181.—That Shakspeare considered the romantic incidents of this play as properly designated by the appellation of *an old tale*, is

Such indeed is the character of the latter and more interesting part of this drama, which, separated by a chasm of sixteen years from the business of the three preceding acts, may be said, in some measure, to constitute a distinct play. The fourth act, especially, is a pastoral of the most fascinating description, in which Perdita, pure as

“ the fann’d snow
That’s bolted by the northern blasts twice o’er,” *

ignorant of her splendid origin, yet, under the appearance of a shepherd’s daughter, acting with such an intuitive nobleness of mind, that —

“ nothing she does, or seems,
But smacks of something greater than herself,” †

exhibits a portrait fresh from nature’s loveliest pencil, where simplicity, artless affection, and the most generous resignation are sweetly blended with a fortitude at once spirited and tender. Thus, when Polixenes, discovering himself at the sheep-shearing, interdicts the contract between Perdita and his son, and threatens the former with a cruel death, if she persist in encouraging the attachment, the reply which she gives is a most beautiful developement of the qualities of mind and heart which we have just enumerated :—

evident from his own application of the phrase to several parts of the plot. Thus, in the second scene of the fifth act, we find it used in the following passages :—

“ How goes it now, sir? this news, which is called true, is so like *an old tale*.”

“ 2d Gent. What, pray you, became of Antigonus, that carried hence the child?

3d Gent. Like *an old tale* still.”

And again, in the next scene :—

“ Paul. That she is living,
Were it but told, you should be hooted at,
Like *an old tale*.”

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. ix. p. 362. Act iv. sc. 3.

† Ibid. vol. ix. p. 343. Act iv. sc. 3.

" *Pet.* Even here undone?

I was not much afeard: for once, or twice,
 I was about to speak; and tell him plainly,
 The selfsame sun, that shines upon his court,
 Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
 Looks on alike. — Will't please you, sir, be gone? (to Florizel.)
 I told you, what would come of this: 'Beseech you,
 Of your own state take care: this dream of mine, —
 Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch further,
 But milk my ewes, and weep." *

The comic characters of this play, which are nearly confined to the last two acts, form a striking contrast and relief to the native delicacy and elegance of manners which distinguish every sentiment and action of the modest and unaffected Perdita; her reputed father and brother and the witty rogue Autolycus being drawn with those strong but natural strokes of broad humour which Shakspeare delighted to display in his characterisation of the lower orders of society. That "snapper up of unconsidered trifles," his frolic pedlar, is one of the most entertaining specimens of wicked ingenuity that want and opportunity ever generated.

33. THE TEMPEST: 1611. The dates assigned by the two chronologers, for the composition of this drama, seem to be inferred from premises highly inconclusive and improbable. Mr. Malone conceives it to have been written in 1612, because its title appears to him to have been derived from the circumstance of a dreadful tempest occurring in the October, November, and December of the year 1612; and Mr. Chalmers has exchanged this epoch for 1613, because there happened "a great tempest of thunder and lightning, on Christmas day, 1612." † "This intimation," he subjoins, "necessarily carries the writing of *The Tempest* into the subsequent year, since there is little probability, that our poet would write this enchanting drama, in the midst of the tempest, which overthrew so many mansions, and wrecked so many ships." ‡

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ix. pp. 366, 367. Act iv. sc. 3.

† Winwood's Memoirs, vol. iii. p. 422.

‡ Supplemental Apology, pp. 438, 439.

It is very extraordinary that, when all the circumstances which could lead to the suggestion of the title of *The Tempest*, are to be found in books, to which, from his allusions, we know our author must have had recourse, and in events which took place, during the two years immediately preceding the period that we have fixed upon, and at the very spot referred to in the play, these critics should have imagined that a series of stormy weather occurring at home, or a single storm on Christmas day, could have operated with the poet in his choice of a name.

It is scarcely possible to avoid smiling at the objection which Mr. Chalmers so seriously brings forward against the conjecture of his predecessor, founded on the improbability of the poet's writing his *Tempest* in the midst of a tempest; a mode of refutation which could only have been adopted one would think under the supposition, that Shakspeare, during these three stormy months, had wanted the protection of a roof. The inference, however, which he draws from his own storm, on Christmas day, namely, that *The Tempest* must necessarily have been written in 1613, is still less tenable than the position of Mr. Malone; for we are told, on the authority of Mr. Vertue's Manuscripts, "that the *Tempest* was acted by John Heminge and the rest of the King's company, before Prince Charles, the Lady Elizabeth, and the Prince Palatine elector, in the beginning of the year 1613." * Now we learn from Wilson the historian, that the Prince Palatine was married to the Lady Elizabeth in February, 1613, her brother Prince Charles leading her to church; and on this occasion, no doubt, it was, that *The Tempest*, having been received the preceding season with great favour and popularity, was re-performed; for Wilson tells us, that in consequence of these nuptials, "the *feastings, maskings, and other Royall formalities*, were as troublesome ('tis presum'd) to the *Lovers*, as the relation of

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 363.

them here may be to the reader ;” and he adds, in the next page, that they were “ tired with *feasting* and *jollity*.” *

But how can this relation be reconciled with the chronology of Mr. Chalmers? for, if *The Tempest*, as he supposes, was written in 1613, it must have been commenced and finished in the course of one month! a rapidity of composition which, considering the unrivalled excellence of this drama, is scarcely within the bounds of probability. Beside, were *The Tempest* the production of January, 1613, it must have been written on the spur of the occasion, and for the nuptials in question; and is it to be supposed that no reference to such an event would be found throughout a play composed expressly to adorn, if not to compliment, the ceremony?

If we can, therefore, ascertain, that all the circumstances necessary for the suggestion, not only of the title of *The Tempest*, but of a considerable part of its fable, may have occurred to Shakspeare’s mind anterior to the close of 1611, and would particularly press upon it, during the two years preceding this date, it may, without vanity, be expected, that the epoch which we have chosen, will be preferred to those which we have just had reason to pronounce either trivial or improbable.

So far back as to 1577, have Mr. Steevens and Dr. Farmer referred for some particulars to which Shakspeare was indebted for his conception of the “foul witch Sycorax,” and her god Setebos †; but the

* Wilson’s *Historie of Great Britain*, pp. 64, 65.

† The idea of the witch, says Mr. Steevens, might have been caught from Dionyse Settle’s *Reporte of the Last Voyage of Captaine Frobisher*, 12mo. bl. l. 1577. He is speaking of a woman found on one of the islands described:—“The old wretch, whome divers of our Saylers supposed to be a Divell, or a *Witche*, plucked off her buskins, to see if she were clouen footed, and for her ougly hewe and deformitie, we let her goe.”—Reed’s *Shakspeare*, vol. iv. p. 33. STEEVENS.

Eden tells us in his *History of Travayle*, 1577, that “the giantes, when they found themselves fettered, roared like bulls, and cried upon *Setebos* to help them.”—*Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 43. note by Farmer.

Mr. Douce thinks that the name of Caliban’s mother, Sycorax, was probably taken by Shakspeare from the following passage in *Batman uppon Bartholome*, 1582:—“The raven

circumstances which led to the name of the play, to the storm with which it opens, and to some of the wondrous incidents on the enchanted island, commence with the publication of Raleigh's "Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana," a book that was printed at London in 1596, and in which this great man, after mentioning the Channel of Bahama, adds, — "The rest of the Indies for calms, and diseases, are very troublesome; and the *Bermudas*, a hellish sea, for *thunder, lightning, and storms.*" *

From this publication, therefore, our author acquired his first intimation of the "*still vexed Bermoothes,*" which was repeated by the appearance of Hackluyt's *Voyages*, in 1600, in which, as Dr. Farmer observes, he might have seen a description of Bermuda, by Henry May, who was *shipwrecked* there in 1593." † But the event which immediately gave rise to the composition of *The Tempest*, was the *Voyage of Sir George Sommers*, who was *shipwrecked* on Bermudas in 1609, and whose adventures were given to the public by Silvester Jourdan, one of his crew, with the following title:—*A Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the ISLE OF DIVELS: By Sir Thomas Gates, Sir Geo. Sommers, and Captayne Newport, and divers others.* In this publication, Jourdan informs us, that "the Islands of the Bermudas, as every man knoweth, that hath heard, or read of them, were never inhabited by any Christian, or heathen, people, but ever esteemed, and reputed, a most *prodigious, and enchanted, place*, affording nothing but *gusts, stormes and foul weather*; which made every navigator and mariner to avoid them, as Scylla and Charybdis, or as they would shun the Devil himselfe."

Now these particulars in Jourdan's book, taken in conjunction with preceding intimations, appear to us to have been fully adequate to the purpose of suggesting to the creative mind of Shakspeare,

is called *corvus* of *Corax* it is said that *ravens* birdes be fed with *dew* of heaven all the time that they have no black *feathers*, by benefite of age." Lib. xii. c. 10.—*Illustrations*, vol. i. p. 8.

* Vide Chalmers's *Apology*, p. 578.

† Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. iv. p. 3.

without any reference to succeeding pamphlets on the subject, or to storms at home, the name, the opening incidents, and the magical portion of his drama; for, when Mr. Chalmers refers us to *A Plaine Description of the Bermudas now called Sommer islands*, it should be recollected, that, even on his own chronology, this work, which was printed in 1613, must, unless it had appeared on the first days of the new year, have come too late to have furnished the poet with any additional information. *

That *The Tempest* had been produced anterior to the stormy autumn of 1612 seems to have been the opinion of Mr. Douce; for, alluding to the use which the commentators have made of the mere date of Sommers's voyage, he adds, — “but the important particulars of his *shipwreck*, from which it is exceedingly probable that the outline of a considerable part of this play was borrowed, has been unaccountably overlooked;” and then, after quoting the title, and noticing some of the particulars of Jourdan's book, and introducing a passage from Stowe's *Annals* descriptive of Sommers's shipwreck on the “dreadful coast of the Bermodes, which island were of all nations said and supposed to bee *enchanted and inhabited with witches and devills*,” he proceeds thus: — “Now if some of these circumstances in the shipwreck of Sir George Sommers be considered, it may possibly turn out that *they* are ‘the particular and recent event which determined Shakspeare to call his play *The Tempest*,’ instead of ‘the great tempest of 1612,’ which has already been supposed to have suggested its name, *and which might have happened after its composition*.” †

From these circumstances, and this chain of reasoning, we are induced to conclude, that *The Tempest* was written towards the close

* As the passage which we have just quoted from Jourdan's pamphlet is, as Mr. Chalmers confesses, in the first edition of 1610, what necessity was there for referring us, for Shakspeare's obligation, to little more than a second edition of it, under the title of “*A Plaine Description*,” &c.? — Vide Chalmers's *Apology*, p. 580.

† Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. pp. 5—7.

of 1611, and that it was brought on the stage early in the succeeding year.

The Tempest is, next to *Macbeth*, the noblest product of our author's genius. Never were the wild and the wonderful, the pathetic and the sublime, more artfully and gracefully combined with the sportive sallies of a playful imagination, than in this enchantingly attractive drama. Nor is it less remarkable, that all these excellencies of the highest order are connected with a plot which, in its mechanism, and in the preservation of the unities, is perfectly classical and correct.

The *action*, which turns upon the restoration of Prospero to his former dignities, involving in its successful issue, the union of Ferdinand and Miranda, the temporary punishment of the guilty, and the reconciliation of all parties, is simple, integral, and complete. The *place* is confined to a small island, and, for the most part, to the cave of Prospero, or its immediate vicinity, and the poet has taken care to inform us twice in the last act, that the *time* occupied in the representation, has not exceeded three hours. *

Yet within this short space are brought together, and without any violation of dramatic probability or consistency, the most extraordinary incidents and the most singular assemblage of characters, that fancy, in her wildest mood, has ever generated. A magician possessed of the most awful and stupendous powers; a spirit of the air beautiful and benign; a goblin hideous and malignant, a compound of the savage, the demon, and the brute; and a young and lovely female who has never seen a human being, save her father, are the inha-

* "Alon. If thou beest Prospero,
Give us particulars of thy preservation:
How thou hast met us here, who *three hours since*
Were wreck'd upon this shore."

Act v. sc. 1. Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. pp. 160, 161.

"Alon. What is this maid, with whom thou wast at play?
Your eld'st acquaintance cannot be *three hours.*"

Act v. p. 163.

bitants of an island, no otherwise frequented than by the fantastic creations of Prospero's necromantic art.

A solemn and mysterious grandeur envelopes the character of Prospero, from his first entrance to his final exit, the vulgar magic of the day being in him blended with such a portion of moral dignity and philosophic wisdom, as to receive thence an elevation, and an impression of sublimity, of which it could not previously have been thought susceptible.

The exquisite simplicity, ingenuous affection, and unsuspicious confidence of Miranda, united as they are with the utmost sweetness and tenderness of disposition, render the scenes which pass between her and Ferdinand beyond measure delightful and refreshing; they are, indeed, as far as relates to her share of the dialogue, perfectly paradisaical. Nor is the conception of this singularly situated character less striking, than the consistency with which, to the very last, it is supported, throughout all its parts.

On the wildly-graceful picture of Ariel, that "delicate spirit," whose occupation it was,

————— "To tread the ooze
Of the salt deep;
To run upon the sharp wind of the north:
To do business in the veins o' the earth,
When it is bak'd with frost;
—— to dive into the fire; to ride
On the curl'd clouds;
————— to fetch dew
From the still vex'd Bermoothes;"

what language can express an adequate encomium! All his thoughts and actions, his pastimes and employments, are such as could only belong to a being of a higher sphere, of a more sublimated and æthereal existence than the race of man. Even the very words which he chants, seem to refer to "no mortal business," and to form "no sound that the earth owes."

Of a nature directly opposed to this elegant and sylph-like essence, is the hag-born monster Caliban, one of the most astonishing pro-

ductions of a mind exhaustless in the creation of all that is novel, original, and great. Generated by a devil and a witch, deformed, prodigious, and obscene, and breathing nothing but malice, sensuality, and revenge, this fearful compound is yet, from the poetical vigour of his language and ideas, highly interesting to the imagination. Imagery, derived from whatever is darkly horrible and mysteriously repulsive, clothe the expression of his passions or the denunciation of his curses; whilst, even in his moments of hilarity, the barbarous, the grotesque, and the romantic, alternately, or conjointly, sustain, with admirable harmony, the keeping of his character.

That the system of *Magic* or *Enchantment*, which has given so much attraction to this play, was at the period of its production an article in the popular creed of general estimation, and, even among the learned, received with but little hesitation, may be clearly ascertained from the writers of Shakspeare's times. Thus, *Howard*, Earl of Northampton, in his "Defensative against the poyson of supposed Prophecies," 1583; *Scot*, in his "Discoverie of Witchcraft" and "Discours of Divels and Spirits," 1584; *James*, in his "Demonologie," 1603; *Mason*, in his "Anatomie of Sorceerie," 1612; and finally, *Burton*, in his "Anatomie of Melancholy," 1617, all bear witness, in such a manner to the fact, as proves, that, of the existence of *The Art of Sorcery*, however unlawful it might be deemed by many, few presumed to doubt. The very title of Howard's book informs us, that "invocations of damned spirits" and "judicials of astrology" were "causes of great disorder in the commonwealth;" and in the work, speaking of the same arts, he adds,—"We need not rifle in the monuments of former times, so long as the present age wherein we live may furnish us with store of most strange examples." *Scot* declares, in his "Epistle to the Reader," that "conjurers and enchanterers make us fooles still, to the shame of us all;" and in the 42d chapter of his 15th book, he has inserted a copy of a letter written to him by a professor of the necromantic art, who had been condemned to die for his supposed diabolical practices, but who, through his own repentance, and the mediation of Lord

Leicester with the Queen, had been reprieved. An extract or two from this curious epistle, will place in a striking light the great prevalence of the credulity on which we are commenting. “Maister R. Scot, according to your request, I have drawne out certaine abuses worth the noting, touching the worke you have in hand; things which I my selfe have seene within these xxvi yeares, among those which were counted famous and skilfull in those sciences. And bicause the whole discourse cannot be set downe, without nominating certaine persons, *of whom some are dead, and some living, whose freends remaine yet of great credit*: in respect thereof, I knowing that mine enimies doo already in number exceed my freends; I have considered with my selfe, that it is better for me to staie my hand, than to commit that to the world, which may increase my miserie more than relevee the same. Notwithstanding, bicause I am noted above a *great many others* to have had some dealings in those vaine arts and wicked practises; I am therefore to signifie unto you, and I speake it in the presence of God, that *among all those famous and noted practisers, that I have been conversant with all these xxvi years*, I could never see anie matter of truth, &c.” He then, after exposing the futility of these studies, and lamenting his addiction to them, adds, — “For mine owne part, I have repented me five yeares past: at which time I sawe a booke, written in the old Saxon toong, by one Sir John Malborne, a divine of Oxenford, three hundred yeares past; wherein he openeth all the illusions and inventions of those arts and sciences: a thing most worthie the noting. I left the booke with the parson of Slangham, in Sussex, where if you send for it in my name, you may have it.”

At the conclusion of this letter, which is dated the 8th of March, 1582, Scot says, as a further proof of the folly of the times, — “I sent for this booke of purpose, to the parson of Slangham, and procured his best friends, men of great worship and credit, to deale with him, that I might borrowe it for a time. But such is his follie and superstition, that although he confessed he had it; yet he would not lend it; albeit a friend of mine, being knight of the shire,

would have given his word for the restitution of the same safe and sound." *

The reception of James's work on Demonology, which is as copious on the arts of enchantment as on those of witchcraft, is itself a most striking instance of the gross credulity of his subjects; for, while the learned, the sensible, and humane treatise of Scot, was either reprobated or neglected, the labours of this monarch in behalf of superstition, were received with applause, and referred to with a deference which admitted not of question.

Mason followed the footsteps of Scot, though not with equal ability, when in 1612 he endeavoured to throw ridicule upon "Inchanters and Charmers—they, which by using of certaine conceited words, characters, circles, amulets, and such like vaine and wicked trumpery (by God's permission) doe work great marvailles: as namely in causing of sicknesse, as also in curing diseases in men's bodies. And likewise binding some, that they cannot use their naturall powers and faculties; as we see in Night-spells. Insomuch as some of them doe take in hand to bind the Divell himselfe by their inchantments."

Five years afterwards, Burton, who seems to have been a believer on the influence which the Devil was supposed to exert in cherishing the growth of Sorcery, records that Magic is "practised by some still, maintained and excused;" and he adds, that "*Nero and Helio-gabalus, Maxentius, and Julianus Apostata*, were never so much addicted to Magick of old, as some of our modern Princes and Popes themselves are *now adayes*." †

The Art of Magic had, during the reign of Elizabeth, assumed a more scientific appearance, from its union with the mystic reveries of the *Cabalists* and *Rosicrusians*, and, under this modification, has it been adopted by Shakspeare for the purposes of dramatic impression. *Astrology, Alchemistry*, and what was termed *Theurgy*, or an intercourse

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, edit. of 1584. pp. 467—469.

† Anatomy of Melancholy, p. 33.

with Divine Spirits, were combined with the more peculiar doctrines of *Necromancy* or the *Black Art*, and, under this form, was a system of mere delusions frequently mistaken for a branch of Natural Philosophy. Thus Fuller, speaking of *Dr. John Dee*, the Prince of Magicians in Shakspeare's days, says,—“ He was a most excellent *Mathematician* and *Astrologer*, well skilled in *Magick*, as the *Antients* did, the Lord *Bacon* doth, and all may accept the sence thereof, viz., in the lawfull knowledg of Naturall Philosophie.

“ This exposed him, anno 1583, amongst his Ignorant Neighbours, where he then liv'd, at *Mortclack* in *Surrey*, to the suspicion of a *Conjurer*: the cause I conceive, that his Library was then seized on, wherein were *four thousand Books*, and *seven hundred* of them *Manuscripts*.” *

This singular character, who was born in 1527, and did not die until after the accession of James, was certainly possessed of much mathematical knowledge, having delivered lectures at Paris on the Elements of Euclid, with unprecedented applause; but he was at the same time grossly superstitious and enthusiastic, not only dealing in nativities, talismans, and charms, but pretending to a familiar intercourse with the world of spirits, of which Dr. Meric Casaubon has published a most extraordinary account, in a large folio volume, entitled, “ *A true and faithful relation of what passed for many years between Dr. John Dee and some spirits*,” 1659: and what is still more extraordinary, this learned editor tells us in his preface, that he “ never gave more credit to any humane history of former times.”

Dee, who had been educated at Cambridge, and was an excellent classical scholar, had, as might be supposed, in an age of almost boundless credulity, many patrons, and among these were the Lords Pembroke and Leicester, and even the Queen herself; but, notwithstanding this splendid encouragement, and much private munificence, particularly from the female world, our astrologer, like most of his tribe, died

* Worthies of England, Part II. p. 116.

miserably poor. His love of books has given him a niche in Mr. Dibdin's Bibliographical Romance, where, under the title of the renowned Dr. John Dee, he is introduced in the following animated manner: — "Let us fancy we see him in his conjuring cap and robes — surrounded with astrological, mathematical, and geographical instruments — with a profusion of Chaldee characters inscribed upon vellum rolls — and with his celebrated *Glass* suspended by magical wires. — Let us then follow him into his study at midnight, and view him rummaging his books; contemplating the heavens; making calculations; holding converse with invisible spirits; writing down their responses: anon, looking into his correspondence with *Count a Lasco*, and the emperors Adolphus and Maximilian; and pronouncing himself, with the most heart-felt complacency, the greatest genius of his age! In the midst of these self-complacent reveries, let us imagine we see his wife and little ones intruding: beseeching him to burn his books and instruments; and reminding him that there was neither a silver spoon, nor a loaf of bread in the cupboard. Alas, poor Dee!" *

* Dibdin's Bibliomania, pp. 343—346. Mr. Dibdin has given us the following account of *Dee's Library*, "as drawn up by our philosopher himself."

"400 *Volumes* — printed and unprinted — bound and unbound — valued at 2000 lib.

"1 Greek, 2 French, and 1 High Dutch, volumes of MSS., alone worth 533 lib. 40 years in getting these books together.

"Appertaining thereto.

"*Sundry rare and exquisitely made Mathematical Instruments.*

"*A radius Astronomicus*, ten feet long.

"*A magnet stone, or Load stone*; of great virtue — which was sold out of the library but for v shill. and for it afterwards (yea piece-meal divided) was more than xx lib. given in money and value.

"*A great case or frame of boxes*, wherein some hundreds of very rare evidences of divers Irelandish territories, provinces, and lands, were laid up. Which territories, provinces, and lands, were therein notified to have been in the hands of some of the ancient Irish princes. Then, their submissions and tributes agreed upon, with seals appendant to the little writings thereof in parchment: and after by some of those evidences did it appear, how some of those lands came to the Lascies, the Mortuomars, the Burghs, the Clares, &c.

"*A Box of Evidences* antient of some Welch princes and noblemen — the like of Norman donation — their peculiar titles noted on the forepart with chalk only, which on the poor boxes remaineth. This box, with another containing similar deedes, were embezzled.

We have some reason to conclude, from the history of his life, of which Hearne has given us a very copious account *, that Dee was more of an enthusiast than a knave; but this cannot be predicated of his associate *Kelly*, who was assuredly a most impudent impostor. "He was born," says Fuller, whose account of him is singularly curious, "at *Worcester*, (as I have it from the *Scheame* of his Nativity, graved from the original calculation of Doctor Dee), *Anno Domini* 1555, August the first, at four o'clock in the afternoon, the Pole being there elevated, qr. 52 10 — He was well studied in the mysteries of nature, being intimate with Doctor *Dee*, who was beneath him in Chemistry, but above him in Mathematicks. These two are said to have found a very large quantity of *Elixir* in the ruins of *Glassenbury Abby*.

"One great bladder with about 4 pound weight, of a very sweetish thing, like a brownish gum in it, artificially prepared by thirty times purifying of it, hath more, than I could well afford him for 100 crownes; as may be proved by witnesses yet living.

"To these he adds his three *Laboratories*, 'serving for Pyrotechnia,' — which he got together after twenty years labor. 'All which furniture and provision, and many things already prepared, is unduly made away from me by sundry meanes, and a few spoiled or broken vessels remain, hardly worth 40 shillings.' But one feature more in poor Dee's character — and that is, his unparalleled serenity and good nature under the most gripping misfortunes — remains to be described: and then we may take farewell of him with aching hearts.

"In the 10th chapter, speaking of the wretched poverty of himself and family ('having not one penny of certain fee, revenue, stipend, or pension, either left him or restored unto him') — Dee says that 'he has been constrained now and then to send parcels of his little furniture of plate to pawn upon usury; and that did he so oft till no more could be sent. After the same manner went his wife's jewels of gold, rings, bracelets, chains, and other their rarities, under the thralldom of the usurer's gripes: 'till *non plus* was written upon the boxes at home.

"In the 11th chapter, he anticipates the dreadful lot of being brought 'to the stepping out of doors (his house being sold). He, and his, with bottles and wallets furnished, to become wanderers as homish vagabonds; or, as banished men, to forsake the kingdom.' Again: 'with bloody tears of heart, he, and his wife, their seven children, and their servants, (seventeen of them in all) did that day make their petition unto their honors, &c. Can human misery be sharper than this — and to be the lot of a philosopher and bibliomaniac? But VENIET FELICIUS ÆVUM." — *Bibliomania*, pp. 347—349.

* "In his edition of *John Confrat. Monach. de. rebus. gestis Glaston.*, vol. ii., where twelve chapters (from whence the above note is partly taken) are devoted to the subject of our philosopher's travels and hardships." *Bibliomania*, p. 343. note.

“ Afterwards (being here in some trouble) he (Kelly) went over beyond the seas, with *Albertus Alasco*, a Polonian Baron, who — it seems, sought to repair his fortunes by associating himself with these two Arch-chemists of *England*.

“ How long they continued together, is to me unknown. *Sir Edward* (though I know not how he came by his knight-hood) with the Doctor, fixed at *Trebona* in *Bohemia*, where he is said to have transmuted a brass* warming-pan, (without touching or melting, onely warming it by the fire, and putting the *Elixir* thereon) into pure silver, a piece whereof was sent to Queen Elizabeth. —

“ They kept constant intelligence with a Messenger or Spirit, giving them advice how to proceed in their mysticall discoveries, and injoining them, that, by way of preparatory qualification for the same, they should enjoy their wives in common. —

“ This probably might be the cause, why Doctor *Dee* left *Kelley*, and return'd into *England*. *Kelley* continuing still in *Germany*, ranted it in his expences (say the Brethren of his own art) above the sobriety befitting so mysterious a Philosopher. He gave away in goldwyer rings, at the marriage of one of his Maid-servants, to the value of *four thousand pounds*. —

“ Come we now to his sad catastrophe. Indeed, the curious had observed, that in the Scheme of his Nativity, not onely the *Dragons-tail* was ready to promote abusive aspersions against him (to which living and dead he hath been subject) but also something malignant appears posited in *Aquarius*, which hath influence on the leggs, which accordingly came to pass. For being *twice* imprisoned (for what misdemeanor I know not) by *Radulphus* the Emperor, he endeavoured to escape out of an high window, and tying his sheets together to let him down fell (being a weighty man) and brake his leggs, whereof he died, 1595.” †

* Vide *Theatrum Chemicum*, p. 481.

† *Worthies of England*, Pt. III. pp. 172, 173.

It appears, however, from other sources, that the trouble to which Kelly was put, consisted in losing his ears on the pillory in Lancashire; that the credulity of the age had allotted him the post of descrier, or seer of visions to Dee, whom he accompanied to Germany, and that one of his offices, under this appointment, was to watch and report the gesticulations of the spirits whom his superior had fixed and compelled to appear in a talisman or stone, which very stone, we are informed, is now in the Strawberry-hill collection, and is nothing more than a finely polished mass of canal coal! His knighthood was the reward of a promise to assist the Emperor Rodolphus the Second, in his search after the philosopher's stone; and the discovery of his deceptive practices led him to a prison, from which it is said Elizabeth, to whom a piece of the transmuted warming-pan had been sent, had tempted him to make that escape which terminated in his death. *

Such were the leaders of the cabalistic and alchemical Magi in the days of our Virgin Queen; men, in the estimation of the great bulk of the people, possessed of super-human power, and who, notwithstanding their ignorance and presumption, and the exposure of their art by some choice spirits of their own, and the immediately subsequent period, among whom *Ben Jonson*, as the author of the *Alchemist*, stands pre-eminent, continued for near a century to excite the curiosity, and delude the expectations of the public. †

* Vide Weaver's Funeral Monuments, p. 45., and Wood's Athenæ Oxon. vol. i. col. 279.

† In what estimation Kelly was held in 1662, is evident from the opinion of Fuller, who closes his account of this daring impostor with the following sentence: — "If his pride and prodigality were severed from him, he would remain a person, on other accounts, for his industry and experience in practical Philosophy, worthy recommendation to posterity." Worthies, p. 174.

That Shakspeare was exempt from the astrological mania of his age, we learn from his fourteenth sonnet, where he tells us, —

" Not from the stars do I my judgment pluck;
And yet methinks I have astronomy,
But not to tell of good, or evil luck,
Of plagues, of dearths, or season's quality:
Nor can I fortune to brief minutes tell,

The delineation of *Prospero*, the noblest conception of the *Magic* character which ever entered the mind of a poet, is founded upon a distinction which was supposed to exist between the several professors of this mysterious science. They were separated, in fact, into two great orders ; into those who *commanded* the service of superior intelligences, and into those who, by voluntary compact, entered into a *league with*, or submitted to be the *instruments* of these powers. Under the first were ranked *Magicians*, who were again classed into higher or inferior, according to the extent of the control which they exerted over the invisible world ; the former possessing an authority over *celestial*, as well as *infernal* spirits. Under the second were included *Necromancers* and *Wizards*, who, for the enjoyment of temporary power, subjected themselves, like the Witch, to final perdition.

Of the highest class of the first order was *Prospero*, one of those Magicians or Conjurers who, as Reginald Scot observes, “ professed an art which some fond divines affirme to be more honest and lawfull than *necromancie*, which is called *Theurgie* ; wherein they worke by good angels.” * Accordingly, we find *Prospero* operating upon inferior agents, upon elves, demons, and goblins, through the medium of Ariel, a spirit too delicate and good to “ act abhorr’d commands,” but who “ answered his best pleasure,” and was subservient to his “ strong bidding.”

Shakspeare has very properly given to the exterior of *Prospero*, several of the adjuncts and costume of the popular magician. Much virtue was inherent in his very garments ; and Scot has, in many instances, particularised their fashion. A pyramidal cap, a robe furred with fox-skins, a girdle three inches in breadth, and inscribed with cabalistic characters, shoes of russet leather, and unsabbarded

Pointing to each his thunder, rain, and wind ;
Or say with princes if it shall go well,
By oft predict that I in heaven find.

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, book xv. chap. 42. p. 466.

swords, formed the usual dress ; but, on peculiar occasions, certain deviations were necessary ; thus, in one instance, we are told the Magician must be habited in “ clean white cloathes ;” that his girdle must be made of “ a drie thong of a lion’s or of a hart’s skin ;” that he must have a “ brest-plate of virgine parchment, sowed upon a piece of new linnen,” and inscribed with certain figures ; and likewise, “ a bright knife that was never occupied,” covered with characters on both sides, and with which he is to “ make the circle, called Saloman’s circle.” *

Our poet has, therefore, laid much stress on these seeming minutiae, and we find him, in the second scene of *The Tempest*, absolutely asserting, that the essence of the art existed in the robe of Prospero, who, addressing his daughter, says, —

————— “ Lend thy hand,
And pluck my *magick* garment from me. — So ; (*Lays down his mantle.*
LIE THERE MY ART.”

A similar importance is assigned to his staff or wand ; for he tells Ferdinand, —

——— “ I can here disarm thee with this stick,
And make thy weapon drop :” †

and, when he abjures the practice of magic, one of the requisites is, to “ break his staff,” and to

“ Bury it certain fathoms in the earth.” ‡

But the more immediate instruments of power were *Books*, through whose assistance *spells* and *adjurations* were usually performed. Reginald Scot, speaking of the traffickers in Magic of his time, says, —
“ These conjurors carrie about *at this daie*, books intituled under

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 415.

† Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 53. Act i. sc. 2.

‡ Ibid. p. 152. Act v. sc. 1.

the names of *Adam*, *Abel*, *Tobie*, and *Enoch*; which *Enoch* they repute the most divine fellow in such matters. They have also among them bookes that they saie *Abraham*, *Aaron*, and *Salomon* made. They have bookes of *Zacharie*, *Paule*, *Honorius*, *Cyprian*, *Jerome*, *Jeremie*, *Albert*, and *Thomas*: also of the angels, *Riziel*, *Razael*, and *Raphael*.”*

Books are, consequently, represented as one of the chief sources of Prospero's influence over the spiritual world. He himself declares, —

————— “I'll to my *book*;
For yet, ere supper time, must I perform
Much business appertaining;” †

and, on relinquishing his art, he says, that

————— “deeper than did ever plummet sound,
I'll drown my *book*;” ‡

whilst Caliban, conspiring against the life of his benefactor, tells Stephano, that, before he attempts to destroy him, he must

————— “Remember,
First to possess his *books*; for without them
He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not
One spirit to command.” §

Though we perceive the effect of Prospero's spells, the mode by which they are wrought does not appear; we are only told that silence is necessary to their success: —

————— “Hush, and be mute,
Or else our spell is marr'd.” ||

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 451.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 100. Act iii. sc. 1.

‡ Ibid. p. 152.

§ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 106. Act iii. sc. 2.

|| Ibid. p. 134. Act iv. sc. 1.

He afterwards assures us, that his "charms crack not," and that his "spirits obey;" and, in one instance, he commissions Ariel to "untie the spell" in which he had bound Caliban and his companions.*

It is probable that any attempt to represent the forms of adjuration and enchantment would have been either too ludicrous or too profane for the purposes of the poet. In the one instance, the mysterious solemnity of the scene would have been destroyed; and in the other, the serious feelings of the spectator might have been shocked; at least, such are the results on the mind of the reader, in perusing the numerous specimens of adjuration in the fifteenth book of Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. One of these, as including an example of the then fashionable mode of conjuration, that of fixing the spirit in a beryl, glass, or stone, according to the practice of *Dee* and *Kelly*, shall be given; omitting, however, all those invocations and addresses which, by a frequent use of names and phrases the most hallowed and sacred, must, on such occasions, prove alike indecorous and disgusting. The adjuration in question is termed by Scot, "an experiment of the dead," or, "conjuring for a dead spirit:" it commences in the following manner, and terminates in obtaining the services of a good and beautiful spirit of the fairy tribe; and such we may suppose to have been the process through which Prospero procured the obedience and ministration of Ariel, for we are expressly told, that "graves" at his "command"

"Have waked their sleepers; oped and let them forth."

"First fast and praie three daies, and absteine thee from all filthinesse; go to one that is new buried, such a one as killed himselfe, or destroyed himself wilfullie: or else get thee promise of one that shall be hanged, and let him sweare an oth to thee, after his bodie is dead, that his spirit shall come to thee, and doe thee true service, at thy

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 148. 167.

commandements, in all daies, houres, and minutes. And let no persons see thy doings, but thy fellow. And about eleven o clocke in the night, go to the place where he was buried, and saie with a bold faith and hartie desire, to have the spirit come that thou dost call for, thy fellow having a candle in his left hand, and in his right hand a *christall stone*, and saie these words following, the maister having a *hazell wand* in his right hand, and these names—written thereupon, *Tetragrammaton + Adonay + Craton*. Then strike three strokes on the ground, and saie, Arise, Arise, Arise! —

“ The maister standing at the head of the grave, his fellow having in his hands the candle and the stone, must begin the conjuration as followeth, and the spirit will appeare to you in the christall stone, in a faire forme of a child of twelve yeares of age. And when he is in, feele the stone, and it will be hot ; and feare nothing, for he or shee will shew manie delusions, to drive you from your worke. Feare God, but feare him not.”

Then follows a long conjuration to constrain the appearance of the spirit, which being effected, another is pronounced to compell him to fetch the “ fairie Sibylia.”

“ This done, go to a place fast by, and in a faire parlor or chamber, make a circle with chalke :— and make another circle for the fairie *Sibylia* to appeare in, foure foote from the circle thou art in, and make no names therein, nor cast anie holie thing therein, but make a circle round with chalke ; and let the maister and his fellowe sit downe in the first circle, the maister having the *booke* in his hand, his fellow having the *christall stone* in his right hand, looking in the stone when the *fairie* dooth appeare.”

The fairie *Sibylia* is then seventimes cited to appear :— “ I conjure thee *Sibylia*, O gentle virgine of fairies, by all the angels of 4 and their characters and vertues, and by all the spirits of 4 and 2 and their characters and vertues, and by all the characters that be in the firmament, and by the king and queene of fairies, and their vertues, and by the faith and obedience which thou bearest unto them, — I conjure thee O blessed and beautifull virgine, by all the riall words

aforesaid; I conjure thee *Sibylia* by all their vertues to appeare in that circle before me visible, in the forme and shape of a beautifull woman in a bright and white vesture, adorned and garnished most faire, and to appeare to me quicklie without deceit or tarrieng, and that thou faile not to fulfill my will and desire effectuallie."

The spirit in the christall stone having produced *Sibylia* within the circle, she is bound to appear "at all times visiblie, as the conjuration of words leadeth, written in the *booke*," and the ceremony is wound up in the subsequent terms:—"I conjure thee *Sibylia*, O blessed virgine of fairies, by the king and queene of fairies, and by their vertues,—to give me good counsell at all times, and to come by treasures hidden in the earth, and all other things that is to doo me pleasure, and to fulfill my will, without any deceit or tarrieng; nor yet that thou shalt have anie power of my bodie or soule, earthlie or ghostlie, nor yet to perish so much of my bodie as one haire of my head. I conjure thee *Sibylia* by all the riall words aforesaid, and by their vertues and powers, I charge and bind thee by the vertue thereof, to be obedient unto me, and to all the words aforesaid, and this bond to stand betweene thee and me, upon paine of everlasting condemnation, *Fiat, fiat, fiat.* Amen.*

The *Sibylia* of this incantation was, therefore, in origin, form, manners, and potency, very much assimilated to the *Ariel* of our author's *Tempest*, being gentle, beautiful, yet possessing great influence, and exerting high authority over numerous inferior essences and powers. Thus the spirits employed by Prospero were subservient to Ariel, and under his immediate direction, partly by his own rank in the hierarchy of elemental existences, and partly by the aid of Prospero.†

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, pp. 401, 402. 404—407.

† "Go," says Prospero, addressing Ariel,

"Go, bring the rabble,
O'er whom I give thee power, here, to this place."

Act iv. sc. 1.

The orders of spirits constituting the miraculous machinery of *The Tempest* are in *Hamlet* ranged under four heads,

——— “In sea or fire, in earth or air,”—

a distribution which, though seeming naturally to spring from the usual nomenclature of the elements, was not the division generally adopted; for Scot, detailing the opinion of *Psellus* “*De Operatione Demonum*,” classes the elementary spirits under six heads, by the addition of *subterranean spirits*, and *spirits of darkness*, “*subterranei et lucifugi*,” and the *Talmudists* and *Platonists* add to these, *solar*, *lunar*, and *stellar* spirits; but our poet was probably influenced in his enumeration, by the perusal of *Batman uppon Bartholome*, who tells us, in a manner calculated to make an impression on the mind, that “spirites are divided one from another, that some are called *firie*, some *earthly*, some *airie*, some *watirie*. Heereupon those foure rivers in Hell, are sayd to be of divers natures, to wit, *PHLEGETHON firie*, *COCYTUS airie*, *STYX watrye*, *ACHERON earthly*.”* We are the more inclined to believe this to have been the case, notwithstanding the obvious facility of such a classification, because it appears to us, that in a prior part of this book, the germ of *Caliban’s* generation may be detected. “*Incubus*,” observes this commentator on Bartholome, “doth infest and trouble women, and *Succubus* doth infest men, by the which wordes (taken from Augustine “*De Civitate Dei*”) it is manifest, that the godly, chaste, and honest minded, are not free from this gross subjection, although more commonly the *dishonest* are molested therewith. Some hold opinion, that *Marline* in the time of *Vortiger* king of great *Britaine* 470 yeres before Christ, was borne after this manner. *Hieronimus Cardanus* in his tretise *De rebus contra naturam*, seemes to be of opinion that spirits or divells may beget and conceive

* “*Batman uppon Bartholome*, His Booke, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*,” &c. folio, 1582, p. 168. col. 4. — He tells us, however, in another place, that “in the region of the sunne, the spirits of the sunne are of more force than the rest. In the region of the moone, those spirites of the moone, and so of the residue.” P. 170. col. 4.

but not after y^e common manner, yet he reciteth a storie of a young damoisell of *Scotland* which was got with child of an inchaunted divell, thinking that he had bene a fayre young man which had layen with hir, whereupon *she brought forth so deformed a monster, that he feared the beholders.*" He then proceeds to observe, that the spirits thus procreating are not of a "subtill Materia," "but a more grose and earthie cause, as *Nymphæ, Dryades, Hobgoblins, and Fairies,*" adding, that two instances of such connection, "it is no straunge secret to disclose," had taken place "in fewe yeares heere in *Englande.*" *

We find Prospero, in fact, employing these four classes of spirits in succession, but in every instance, through the immediate or remote agency of *Ariel*. Those of *fire* are thus described:—

————— " Now on the beak,
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
I flam'd amazement: Sometimes, I'd divide,
And burn in many places; on the top-mast,
The yards and bowsprit, would I flame distinctly,
Then meet, and join: Jove's lightnings, the precursors
O'the dreadful thunder-claps, more momentary
And sight-out-running were not: —

————— " All, but mariners,
Plung'd in the foaming brine, and quit the vessel,
Then all a-fire with me: the king's son, Ferdinand,
With hair up-staring (then like reeds, not hair,)
Was the first man that leap'd; cried, *Hell is empty,*
And all the devils are here." †

The spirits of the *water* are divided into *sea-nymphs*, or *elves of brooks* and *standing lakes*. Under the first of these characters they are most exquisitely introduced as solacing Ferdinand, after the terrors of his shipwreck:—

" Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands

* *Batman* uppon *Bartholome*, p. 84. col. 3, 4.

† *Reed's Shakspeare*, vol. iv. p. 28. Act i. sc. 2.

Court'sied when you have, and kiss'd,
 (The wild waves whist,)
 Foot it featly here and there;
 And, sweet sprites, the burden bear."

Nothing, indeed, can be more appropriately wild than the imagery of the ensuing song, which arrests the ear of Ferdinand whilst he is uttering his astonishment at the previous melody:—

" Where should this musick be? i' the air, or the earth?
 It sounds no more: — Sitting on a bank,
 Weeping again the king my father's wreck,
 This musick crept by me upon the waters;
 Allaying both their fury, and my passion,
 With it's sweet air: thence I have follow'd it,
 Or it hath drawn me rather: — But 'tis gone.
 No, it begins again."

" Full fathom five thy father lies;
 Of his bones are coral made;
 Those are pearls that were his eyes:
 Nothing of him that doth fade,
 But doth suffer a sea-change
 Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
 Hark! now I hear them, — ding — dong, bell." *

Well may Ferdinand exclaim, " This is no mortal business !"

The spirits of *earth*, or *goblins*, were usually employed by Prospero as instruments of punishment. Thus Caliban, apprehensive of chastisement for bringing in his wood too slowly, gives us a fearful detail of their inflictions: —

————— " His spirits hear me —
 For every trifle are they set upon me:
 Sometime like apes, that moe and chatter at me,
 And after bite me; then like hedg-hogs, which

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. pp. 43—46. Act i. sc. 2.—This song has been admirably imitated by Kirke White in the opening of his fine fragment, entitled "The Dance of the Consumptives."—Vol. i. p. 295. 1st edit.

Lie tumbling in my bare-foot way, and mount
 Their pricks at my foot-fall: sometime am I
 All wound with adders, who, with cloven tongues,
 Do hiss me into madness." *

They are afterwards commissioned, in the shape of hounds, to hunt this hag-born monster, and his friends Trinculo and Stephano, Prospero telling Ariel, —

" Go, charge *my goblins* that they grind their joints
 With dry convulsions; shorten up their sinews
 With aged cramps; and more pinch-spotted make them,
 Than pard, or cat o'mountain." †

Lastly, the spirits of *air*, as beings of a more delicate and refined nature, are appointed by our magician to personate, under the direction of Ariel, a "most majestic vision;" "spirits," says their great task-master,

—————" which by mine art
 I have from their confines call'd to enact
 My present fancies;" ‡

and which, on the fading of this "insubstantial pageant," melt "into air, into thin air."

It appears, also, that these ethereal forms were occupied night and day in chanting the most delicious melodies, or in suggesting the most delightful dreams. The isle, says Caliban,

—————" is full of noises,
 Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.
 Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
 Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
 That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
 Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
 The clouds, methought, would open, and shew riches
 Ready to drop upon me; that, when I waked,
 I cry'd to dream again." §

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 81. Act ii. sc. 2.

† Ibid. p. 134. Act iv. sc. 1.

‡ Ibid. p. 147. Act iv. sc. 1.

§ Ibid. p. 109. Act iii. sc. 2.

But of the filmy texture, the tiny dimensions, and fairy recreations of these elegant beings, we have the most exquisite description in the song which the poet puts into the mouth of Ariel on the prospect of his approaching freedom:—

“ Where the bee sucks, there suck I;
In a cowslip’s bell I lie:
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat’s back I do fly,
After summer merrily:
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.” *

That all these elementary spirits were agents only on compulsion, and their obedience the result solely of magic power, is evident from the conduct of Ariel, and the language of Caliban; the former repeatedly asking for liberty, and the latter declaring, that “they all do hate him, as rootedly as I.”

It is equally clear, from various parts of this play, that each class had a period prescribed for its operations: thus Prospero threatens Caliban, that

————— “ urchins
Shall for that *vast of night that may work*,
All exercise on thee;” †

and, in invoking the various elves, he speaks of those

“ that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew;” ‡

a doctrine which is still more minutely expressed in other dramas of our poet. In *Hamlet*, for instance, we are told that, at “the *crowing of the cock*,”

“ The extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine;” §

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 154. Act v. sc. 1. † Ibid. pp. 38, 39. Act i. sc. 2.
‡ Ibid. p. 151. Act v. sc. 1. § Ibid. vol. xviii. pp. 24, 25. Act i. sc. 1.

and in *King Lear*, that the foul "fiend Flibbertigibbet *begins at curfew, and walks till the first cock.*" *

One principal reason for the reluctance expressed by Ariel and his associates was, that they were driven, by the irresistible control of the magician, to perform deeds often alien to their dispositions, and to which, if left to themselves, they were either partially or totally inadequate, and, indeed, for the most part utterly averse. We accordingly find Prospero, in his celebrated invocation to these various ministers of his art, addressing them in a tone of high authority; "by 'your' aid," he exclaims,

" (Weak masters though ye be) I have be-dimm'd
The noon-tide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt: the strong bas'd promontory
Have I made shake; and by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar: graves, at my command,
Have wak'd their sleepers; oped, and let them forth
By my so potent art." †

This is a passage, in which, with its immediately preceding context, Shakspeare has been indebted, as Dr. Farmer observes, to Golding's translation of the *Medea* of Ovid; having evidently, in many parts, adopted the very language of that version. But it is also strictly conformable to the powers with which the magicians of his own day were invested. "These," says Scot, "deale with no inferiour causes: these fetch divels out of hell, and angels out of heaven; these raise up what bodies they list, though they were dead, buried, and rotten long before; and fetch soules out of heaven or hell. — These, I saie, take upon them also the raising of tempests, and earthquakes, and to doo as much as God himselfe can doo. These are no small fooles, they go not to worke with a baggage tode, or a

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xvii. p. 471. Act iii. sc. 4.

† Ibid. vol. iv. pp. 151, 152. Act v. sc. 1.

cat, as witches doo; but with a *kind of majestie*, and with *authoritie* they call up by name, and have at their commandement — divells, who have under them, as their ministers, a great multitude of legions of petty divels." *

We may finally remark, that over the popular creed relative to the Art of Magic, and which, as detailed in the common books and traditions on the subject, presents us with little but what is either ridiculous or revolting, Shakspeare has exerted a species of enchantment which infinitely surpasses that of the most profound *Magi* of classic or of Gothic lore; eliciting from materials equally crude, gigantic, and extravagant, the elements of beauty, sublimity, and awful wonder; and unfolding such a picture of what *may be conceived* within the reach of human skill and science, and so much of the philosophy of poetry in his glimpses of the spiritual world, that while we are spell-struck by the creations of a fancy beyond all others glowing and romantic, we yet feel ourselves in the presence, and bow before the throne, of Nature.

34. OTHELLO: 1612. Mr. Malone has assigned the composition of this play to the year 1611, though, as he confesses, with little satisfaction to himself, in consequence of Dr. Warburton having considered the following passage, in the third act of this play, as an allusion to the institution of the order of Baronets, created by James the First, in 1611: —

————— " the hearts of old gave hands,
But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts." †

The baronets, remarks Warburton, " had an addition to their paternal arms, of an hand *gules* in an escutcheon argent. And we are not to doubt but that this was *the new heraldry* alluded to by our author." ‡

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 377.

† Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xix. p. 414. and note.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xix. p. 415. and vol. ii. p. 359.

That the text contains a sly allusion to the *new heraldry of hands* in the baronet's arms, there cannot, as Mr. Douce has justly observed, be a doubt *; but, unfortunately for Mr. Malone's chronology, Dr. Warburton was mistaken as to the *period* of the grant of arms, Mr. Chalmers having clearly proved, that "the additional armorial bearing, of the bloody hand, was not given by the patent of creation. — But the King, wishing to *ampliate* his favour towards the baronets, granted them, by a *second* patent, dated the 28th of May 1612, among other preheminences, 'the arms of Ulster, that is, in a field argent, a hand *geules*, or a *bloudie hand*.'" †

Now, as we have it recorded, on the authority of Mr. Vertue's MS., that *Othello* was acted at court EARLY in the year 1613 ‡, it might have been imagined that Mr. Chalmers's discovery would have led him to the adoption of the epoch which we have chosen. But, strange as it may appear, this is not the case; for, finding Iago, in the subsequent act, remarking to Othello, in reference to Desdemona, "If you are so fond over her iniquity, give her *patent* to § offend," he immediately disputes the testimony of Vertue, which had been allowed in every other instance, and because a clamour had occurred in the House of Commons against patents of monopoly, in May, 1614, places *Othello* in this very year ||, when, but three pages before, he had spoken of "the *audience*" knowing, "from their feelings, how much vexation had arisen from the *patents of monopoly*, which *Queen Elizabeth*, and King James, had so frequently granted;" and referring, in a note, to a declaration of Sir Francis Bacon to the House of Commons, in which he tells them, "if you make a penal statute, the *Queen* will dispense with it, and grant a *patent* with a *non obstante*." ¶

Convinced that an allusion so indeterminate, and which might have been as much relished by an audience before, as after, the year

* Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 270.

† Supplemental Apology, p. 460.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 359.

§ Supplemental Apology, p. 459.

|| Ibid. p. 462: ¶ Ibid. p. 459.

1614, ought not to weigh against a positive and respectable testimony, we feel no hesitation in expressing our belief that *Othello* was written in the interval elapsing between the 28th of May, 1612, and the 1st of January, 1613.

The tragedy of *Othello*, certainly *one* of the first-rate productions of its author, is yet, in our opinion, inferior, in point of originality and poetic wealth, to *Macbeth*, to *Lear*, to *Hamlet*, and *The Tempest*, though superior, perhaps, to every other play. It is, without doubt, an unrivalled representation of the passion of jealousy, in all its stages and effects; but the incidents, if we except the catastrophe, are pretty closely copied from the novel of *Giraldi Cinthio*, who, as Mr. Steevens has observed, "supplied our author with a regular and circumstantial outline." It has also been remarked by Mr. Dunlop, and with some truth, that "the characters of Iago, Desdemona, and Cassio, are taken from Cinthio with scarcely a shade of difference *;" a declaration, however, which, with respect to Desdemona, cannot be admitted without great qualification; for with what beauty, with what pathetic impressiveness, is her part filled up, when compared with the sketch of the Italian novelist! We must also recollect, that although the incidents in which *Othello* is concerned be nearly the same in both productions, the *character* of the Moor has no prototype in Cinthio, but is exclusively the property of Shakspeare.

But the most extraordinary criticism which was probably ever passed on the general cast and execution of *Othello*, has fallen from the pen of Mr. Steevens. "Should readers," says this gentleman, "who are alike conversant with the appropriate excellences of poetry and painting, pronounce on the reciprocal merits of these great productions, (*Othello* and *Macbeth*,) I must suppose they would describe them as of different pedigrees. They would add, that one was of the school of Raphael, the other from that of Michael Angelo; and that if the steady Sophocles and Virgil should have decided in favour

* History of Fiction, 1st edit. vol. ii. p. 365.

of *Othello*, the remonstrances of the daring Æschylus and Homer would have claimed the laurel for *Macbeth*." *

That *Othello*, being more regular in the construction of its fable than *Macbeth*, might, on that account, be preferred by Sophocles and Virgil, will readily be granted; but that it has, in its general style of composition, any pretensions to be classed as a production of the school of Raffaele, the leading features of which, according to Sir Joshua Reynolds, are, in conception, *beauty, dignity, and grace*; and in execution, *correctness of drawing and purity of taste*†, is an imagination alike extravagant and unfounded. Were we disposed to carry on the allusion to the art of painting, it might be said with a much greater approximation to truth, that this very impressive drama was *designed* in the school of *Spagnuololetto*, and tinted in that of *Rembrandt*; the dark strong manner of the former, and the bold pencil and distinct colouring of the latter, being infinitely more analogous to the strength of its characterisation, and the forcible and often contrasted tone of its composition.

What, for instance, can be more opposed in structure, or contrasted in manner, more partaking of the rapid transition of light and shade which distinguish the school of Rembrandt, than the characters of *Othello* and *Desdemona*. From the one we involuntarily retire, appalled by the storm of vindictive passion which agitates his breast; while the other, all tenderness, gentleness, and humility, is entwined about our hearts by the most fascinating ties of simplicity and spotless purity. The prevailing tone of the picture is, nevertheless, gloomy and terrific in the extreme, and the denouement such, as not even Spagnuololetto, though remarkable for the direful nature of his subjects, has ever exceeded.

We must acknowledge, however, that there is a grandeur and sub-

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xix. pp. 528, 529.

† Reynolds's Works apud Malone, vol. i. p. 129., and vol. iii. p. 173., where this

"Unrivall'd sovereign of the realms of grace"

is characterized in a most masterly manner.

limity in the delineation of Othello, of which the painter just mentioned had no conception ; for though in his jealousy he is sensual and ferocious, apart from this horrid phrenzy which burns within him quenchless as the fervors of his native climate, he exhibits many of the noblest virtues of humanity, being open, magnanimous, and brave, confiding, grateful, and affectionate ; and, considering the subtlety with which his suspicions are fostered and inflamed, he becomes at length, from the intensity of his sufferings, an object both of pity and admiration.

Iago, the artful instrument of his ruin, the most cool and malignant villain which the annals of iniquity have ever recorded, would, from the detestation which accompanies his every action, be utterly insupportable in the representation, were it not for the talents, for the skill and knowledge in the springs and principles of human thought and feeling, which he constantly displays, and which, fortunately for the moral of the scene, while they excite and keep alive an eager interest and curiosity, shield him not from our abhorrence and condemnation.

Amid this whirlwind and commotion of hatred and revenge, the modest, the artless, the unsuspecting Desdemona, seems, in the soothing but transient influence which she exerts, like an evening star, that beams lovely, for a moment, on the dark heavings of the tempest, and then is lost for ever !

35. TWELFTH NIGHT : 1613. When Mr. Malone adopted the following passage, on the suggestion of Mr. Tyrwhitt *, as a sufficient basis for the assignment of this play to the year 1614, he appears to have been easily and egregiously misled. Antonio, addressing Sir Toby Belch, says, —

“ If this young gentleman
Have done offence, *I take the fault on me :*

* Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 366.

to which the knight replies : — “Nay, if you be an *undertaker*, I am for you *;” a retort which Mr. Tyrwhitt imagined to contain an allusion to some persons who, in 1614, “had *undertaken*, through their influence in the House of Commons, to carry things according to His Majesty’s wishes;” and who, in consequence of this conduct, were stigmatised with the invidious name of *undertakers*. † But we find, from a reference to the Journals of the House of Commons, that the terms *Takers* and *Undertakers* had been frequently used in King James’s parliaments, anteriorly to 1614 ‡, and Mr. Ritson pertinently observes, that “*Undertakers* were persons employed by the King’s purveyors to take up provisions for the royal household, and were no doubt exceedingly odious §;” so that an allusion to this epithet, in a *political* sense, if one were here intended, could not serve to appropriate the date of 1614. This being the case, there can be no hesitation in adopting the opinion of Ritson and Mason, who conceive Sir Toby intended a mere quibble on the word, of which the simple meaning is, that of one man taking upon himself the quarrel of another. §

Having set aside, therefore, any chronological inference from this source, let us turn to Mr. Chalmers, who seems to have determined the date of this drama on better grounds. Yet of the three intimations on which he has formed his conclusion, the *first*, derived from a supposed reference to the British Undertakers for the plantation of Ulster, we believe to be entitled to as little credit as the kindred hypothesis of Mr. Malone. The *second*, which is founded on the evident intention of our poet to place in a ludicrous light the then very fashionable rage for duelling, is exclusively his own, and carries with it no inconsiderable weight. “In *Twelfth Night*,” he remarks, “Shakspeare tried to effect, by ridicule, what the state was unable to perform by legislation. The duels, which were so incorrigibly fre-

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 373. Act iii. sc. 4.

† Ibid. vol. v. p. 374.

‡ Chalmers’s Supplemental Apology, p. 442.

§ Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 374. note.

quent in that age, were thrown into a ridiculous light by *the affair* between Viola and Sir Andrew Ague-cheek. Sir Francis Bacon had lamented, in the House of Commons, on the 3d of March, 1609-10, the great difficulty of redressing the evil of duels, owing to the corruption of man's nature.* King James tried to effect what the Parliament had despaired of effecting; and, in 1613, he issued 'An Edict and Censure against Private Combats †,' which was conceived with great vigour, and expressed with decisive force; but, whether with the help of Bacon, or not, I am unable to ascertain. This is another remarkable event in 1613, which the commentators have overlooked, though it may have caught Shakspeare's eye." ‡

The *third*, common to both chronologers, but which has only received its due influence, in the chronological scale, from the statement of Mr. Chalmers, turns on the declaration of Fabian to Sir Toby, that he would not give his part of the sport, alluding to the plot against Malvolio, "for a pension of thousands to be paid from the Sophy §;" and on the assertion of Sir Toby to Sir Andrew Ague-cheek, that Viola had been "fencer to the Sophy." || Now it appears from Mr. Chalmers, that "in 1613, Sir Anthony Shirley published his travels into Persia; with his *dangers* and *distresses*, and his *strange* and *unexpected deliverances*;" that "Sir Robert Shirley, the brother of Sir Anthony, arrived in October, 1611, as Ambassador from *the Sophy*; bringing with him a Persian Princess, as his wife;" that "he remained here, through the whole of the year 1612, at an expence to King James of four pounds a day," and that "he departed in January, 1613." ¶

These intimations induced Mr. Chalmers to infer, "that *Twelfth Night* was written in 1613, while these various objects were in the

* Howe's Chronicle, 1004, under the year 1613.

† It was printed by Barker, the King's Printer, the same year.

‡ Supplemental Apology, pp. 443, 444.

§ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 334. Act ii. sc. 5.

|| Ibid. vol. v. p. 372. Act iii. sc. 4.

¶ Supplemental Apology, pp. 444, 445.

eye, or in the recollection of the public ;" a conclusion which we see no reason to dispute.

The dramatic career of our immortal poet could not be closed with a production, in its kind, more exquisitely finished, than the comedy of *Twelfth Night*. The serious and the humorous scenes are alike excellent ; the former

" give a very echo to the seat
Where love is thron'd," *

and are tinted with those romantic hues, which impart to passion the fascinations of fancy, and which stamp the poetry of Shakspeare with a character so transcendently his own, so sweetly wild, so tenderly imaginative. Of this description are the loves of Viola and Orsino, which, though involving a few improbabilities of incident, are told in a manner so true to nature, and in a strain of such melancholy enthusiasm, as instantly put to flight all petty objections, and leave the mind rapt in a dream of the most delicious sadness. The fourth scene of the second act more particularly breathes the blended emotions of love, of hope, and of despair, opening with a highly interesting description of the soothing effects of music, in allaying the pangs of unrequited affection, and in which the attachment of Shakspeare to the simple melodies of the olden time is strongly and beautifully expressed.

From the same source which has given birth to this delightful portion of the drama, appears to spring a large share of that rich and frolic humour which distinguishes its gayer incidents. The delusion of Malvolio, in supposing himself the object of Olivia's desires, and the ludicrous pretensions of Sir Andrew Ague-cheek to the same lady, fostered as they are by the comic manœuvres of the convivial Sir Toby, and the keen-witted Maria, furnish, together with the professional drollery of Feste the jester, an ever-varying fund of pleasantry

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 306. Act ii. sc. 4.

and mirth ; scenes in which wit and raillery are finely blended with touches of original character, and strokes of poignant satire.

To these *thirty-five genuine plays* *, as they may be termed, a large number, when we consider that the life of their author extended very little beyond half a century, interest and unauthorised rumour have added a long list of spurious productions. Among these, we have assigned our reasons for placing what has been commonly called the

* Of these, *twenty* were published in 4to., (including *Pericles*, and omitting *Titus Andronicus*,) and the rest in the first folio, 1623. On this, the earliest complete collection of our author's plays, Mr. Steevens has given us, with the wit and humour which so peculiarly distinguished him, the following interesting *jeu d'esprit* : —

“ Of all volumes, those of popular entertainment are soonest injured. It would be difficult to name four folios that are oftener found in dirty and mutilated condition, than this first assemblage of Shakspeare's plays — God's Revenge against Murder — The Gentleman's Recreation — and Johnson's Lives of the Highwaymen.

“ Though Shakspeare was not, like Fox the Martyrologist, deposited in churches, to be thumbed by the congregation, he generally took post on our hall tables ; and that a multitude of his pages have ‘ their effect of gravity,’ may be imputed to the various eatables set out every morning on the same boards. It should seem that most of his readers were so chary of their time, that (like Pistol, who gnaws his leek and swears all the while,) they fed and studied at the same instant. I have repeatedly met with thin flakes of pie-crust between the leaves of our author. These unctuous fragments, remaining long in close confinement, communicated their grease to several pages deep on each side of them. — It is easy enough to conceive how such accidents might happen ; — how aunt Bridget's mastication might be disordered at the sudden entry of the Ghost into the Queen's closet, and how the half-chewed morsel dropped out of the gaping Squire's mouth, when the visionary Banquo seated himself in the chair of Macbeth. Still, it is no small eulogium on Shakspeare, that his claims were more forcible than those of hunger. — Most of the first folios now extant, are known to have belonged to ancient families resident in the country.

“ Since our breakfasts have become less gross, our favourite authors have escaped with fewer injuries ; not that (as a very nice friend of mine observes) those who read with a coffee-cup in their hands, are to be numbered among the contributors to bibliothecal purity.

“ I claim the merit of being the first commentator on Shakspeare who strove, with becoming seriousness, to account for the frequent stains that disgrace the earliest folio edition of his plays, which is now become the most expensive single book in our language ; for what other English volume without plates, and printed since the year 1600, is known to have sold, more than once, for thirty-five pounds fourteen shillings ?” — Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. pp. 146, 147.

Since this note was written, a copy of the first folio has produced the enormous price of ONE HUNDRED POUNDS. See Roxburghe Catalogue, p. 112. No. 3786.

First Part of King Henry the Sixth, but which, in Henslowe's catalogue of plays performed at the Rose theatre, is simply designated by the title of *Henry the Sixth*. In the same catalogue, also, is to be found *Titus Andronicus*, which, though printed like *Henry*, in the first folio, has, if possible, still fewer pretensions to authenticity, having been clearly ascertained by the commentators, both from external and internal evidence, to possess no claim to such distinction, and to hold no affinity with the undisputed works of Shakspeare.*

In a new edition of the *Supplement*, therefore, which Mr. Malone published in 1780, it is our recommendation that these two pieces be inserted, as proper companions for *Lochrine*, *Sir John Oldcastle*, *Lord Cromwell*, *The London Prodigal*, *The Puritan*, and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*. Of these wretched dramas, it has been now positively proved, through the medium of the Henslowe Papers, "that the name of Shakspeare, which is printed at length in the title-pages of *Sir John Oldcastle*, 1600, and *The London Prodigal*, 1605, was affixed to those pieces by a knavish bookseller, without any foundation," the following entry occurring in the manuscript, on the 16th of October, 1599:—"Received by me Thomas Downton, of Philip Henslowe, to pay Mr. Monday, Mr. Drayton, Mr. Wilson, and Hathway, for *The first part of the Lyfe of Sir Jhon Ouldcastell*, and in earnest of *the Second Pte*, for the use of the company, ten pound, I say received 10lb."†

Not content with this ample addition, which first appeared in the folio of 1664, the public has been further imposed upon by another illegitimate group, principally derived from a blind confidence in the accuracy of catalogues, and the fabrication of booksellers. From these sources, and from the authority of a volume formerly in the possession of King Charles the Second, and lettered on the back, SHAKSPEARE, Vol. I., the subsequent enumeration has been given by Mr. Steevens, viz.:—1. *The Arraignment of Paris*; 2. *The Birth of*

* Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xxi. pp. 4, 5, 6.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 390, 391.

Merlin; 3. *Edward III.*; 4. *Fair Emm*; 5. *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*; and 6. *Mucedorus*; to which may be added, from Warburton's Collection of Old Dramas, where they are said to have been entered on the books of the Stationers' Company, as written by Shakspeare, 7. *Duke Humphrey*, a Tragedy; and 8. *The History of King Stephen*, both registered, June 29. 1660. * George Peele, it appears, was the author of *The Arraignment of Paris* †, and a writer, who signs himself T. B., of *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* ‡, while the ascription of the plays, once in Warburton's library, was probably owing, at that distance of time, either to the ignorance, credulity, or fraud, of some heedless or mercenary trader.

To enter into any critical discussion of the merits or defects of these pieces, would be an utter abuse of time. We do not believe that, either in the play of *Henry the Sixth*, or *Titus Andronicus*, twenty lines can be found of Shakspeare's composition; and, in the residue of this first group, consisting of six more, we decidedly think not so many. In the second, including also eight dramas, the only production now extant, of any worth, is *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, which contains a few pleasing and interesting passages expressed with ease and simplicity.

We have still to notice some vague reports relative to our poet's occasional junction with his contemporaries in dramatic composition: thus, we are told, that he assisted Ben Jonson in his § *Sejanus*; Davenport, in his *Henry the First* ||, and Fletcher, in his *Two Noble Kinsmen*. ¶ Of these traditional stories, the first has been very de-

* See Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxxxv. p. 219., and Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. pp. 154, 155.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 154. note. ‡ Ibid. p. 129.

§ Capell's School of Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 479. See also Gifford's Ben Jonson, vol. i. p. lxx.

|| Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxxxv. p. 219.

¶ On the authority of the title of the first quarto, printed in 1634, eighteen years after the death of Shakspeare.

servedly given up, as “entirely out of the question*,” the second rests merely on the unsupported assertion of a Stationers’ Register †, and the third, though more express and distinct, has been completely refuted by Colman and Steevens. ‡ Indeed, there is much reason to suppose that *The Two Noble Kinsmen* was not written until after the death of Shakspeare. §

From what has been said, under each article of the preceding chronology, perhaps no very inadequate idea may be formed of the DRAMATIC CHARACTER of our poet; but, it will be expected here, and it is indeed essential to a just and facile comprehension of the subject, that a summary or condensed view of this character be attempted, in order, by collecting the scattered rays into a focus, to throw upon it a due degree of brilliancy and strength.

With the view of ascertaining the peculiar GENIUS OF HIS DRAMA, it is necessary that we should attend to a distinction, which has been very correctly and luminously laid down by some late German critics, particularly by *Herder* and *Schlegel*, who oppose the modern to the ancient drama, under the appellation of the *Gothic* or *romantic*, assimilating the *antique* or *classical* theatre to a group in sculpture, and the *Gothic* or *romantic* to an extensive picture, separation being the essence of the former, and combination of the latter; or, in other words, that the spirit of the Grecian drama is *plastic*, and that of the English *picturesque*.

* For proof of this, see Gifford’s *Jonson*, vol. i. p. lxx. note.

† See *Gent. Magazine*, vol. lxxxv. p. 219., and *Biographia Dramatica*, 1782, vol. i. p. 118. article *Davenport*.

‡ Colman’s *Beaumont and Fletcher*, vol. i. p. 118., and Reed’s *Shakspeare*, vol. xxi. p. 401. et seq.

§ “*The Two Noble Kinsmen*,” observes Steevens, “could not have been composed till after 1611, nor perhaps antecedent to the deaths of Beaumont and our author, when assistance and competition ceased, and the poet, who resembled the latter most, had the fairest prospect of success. During the life of Beaumont, which concluded in 1615, it cannot well be supposed that Fletcher would have deserted him, to write in concert with any other dramatist. Shakspeare survived Beaumont only by one year, and, during that time, is known to have lived in Warwickshire, beyond the reach of Fletcher, who continued to reside in London till he fell a sacrifice to the plague in 1625.”—Reed’s *Shakspeare*, vol. xxi. p. 407.

In fact, the *Romantic Drama* is the result of that great change which took place in society on the extinction of the western empire, when the blended influence of Christianity and Chivalry, operating on the stern virtues of the Teutonic tribes, gave birth to a spirit of seriousness and sentiment, of love and honour, of enterprise and adventure, which led to a constant aspiration after the great, the wonderful, the wild, and, by mingling the melancholy of a sublime religion with an enthusiastic homage for female worth, threw an anxious but unparalleled interest over all the relations of existence, and all the products of intellectual effort.

The effect of this combination on the poetry of the middle ages, and more especially on that of the immediately subsequent centuries, in impressing it with an awful and mysterious character, has been beautifully sketched by Schlegel, particularly where, as in the following passage, he accounts for the solemn and contemplative cast of its structure, by tracing its dependency on the genius of our faith. "Among the Greeks," he observes, "human nature was in itself all-sufficient; they were conscious of no wants, and aspired at no higher perfection than that which they could actually attain by the exercise of their own faculties. We, however, are taught by superior wisdom that man, through a high offence, forfeited the place for which he was originally destined; and that the whole object of his earthly existence is to strive to regain that situation, which, if left to his own strength, he could never accomplish. The religion of the senses had only in view the possession of outward and perishable blessings; and immortality, in so far as it was believed, appeared in an obscure distance like a shadow, a faint dream of this bright and vivid futurity. The very reverse of all this is the case with the Christian; every thing finite and mortal is lost in the contemplation of infinity; life has become shadow and darkness, and the first dawning of our real existence opens in the world beyond the grave. Such a religion must waken the foreboding, which slumbers in every feeling heart, to the most thorough consciousness, that the happiness after which we strive we can never here attain; that

no external object can ever entirely fill our souls ; and that every mortal enjoyment is but a fleeting and momentary deception. When the soul, resting as it were under the willows of exile, breathes out its longing for its distant home, the prevailing character of its songs must be melancholy. Hence the poetry of the ancients was the poetry of enjoyment, and ours is that of desire : the former has its foundation in the scene which is present, while the latter hovers betwixt recollection and hope. Let me not be understood to affirm that every thing flows in one strain of wailing and complaint, and that the voice of melancholy must always be loudly heard. As the austerity of tragedy was not incompatible with the joyous views of the Greeks, so the romantic poetry can assume every tone, even that of the most lively gladness ; but still it will always, in some shape or other, bear traces of the source from which it originated. The feeling of the moderns is, upon the whole, more intense, their fancy more incorporeal, and their thoughts more contemplative.” *

Who does not perceive that this reference to futurity, this apprehension of the possible consequences of death, which chills the blood with awful emotion, and mingles fear even with the energies of hope, is peculiarly characteristic of the serious drama of Shakspeare? In what poet, for instance, shall we find the terrors of dissolution painted with such appalling strength? where nature recoiling with such involuntary horror from the thoughts of extinction? and where those blended feelings which, on the eve of our departure, even agitate the good, ere the forms of earthly love sink into night, and a world unknown receives the disembodied spirit? Need we point to *Henry the Sixth*, to *Hamlet*, to *Measure for Measure*, to *Macbeth*, and to many others, for proofs of this continual appeal to life beyond the grave, this perpetual effort to unite, with influential power, these two states of our existence, certainly one of the most striking distinctions which separate the *romantic* from the *antique* style

* Lectures on Dramatic Literature, vol. i. pp. 15, 16.

of dramatic fiction; and in which, as in every other feature of this species of poetry, Shakspeare was the first who, in our own or any other country, exhibited such unrivalled excellence, as to constitute him, in every just sense of the term, the founder of this species of the drama.

For have we not, in his productions, the noblest model of that comprehensive form which, including under one view all the varieties and vicissitudes of human being, presents us with a picture in which not only the virtues and the vices, but the follies and the frailties, the levities and the mirth of man, are harmonised and blended into a perfect whole, connected too, and that intimately, with a vast range of surrounding circumstances which, both in the foreground and in the distance, are so managed, as, by the illusory aid of tinting, grouping, and shadowing, to assist in the production of a great and determinate effect. To evince the superiority of this mode of composition over that which prevailed on the Grecian stage, it is only necessary to reflect, that the concatenated series of events which is unfolded, with so much unity of design, in the single drama of *Macbeth*, could only be represented, on the simple and confined plan of the school of Athens, by a trilogy, or succession of distinct tragedies! Can a system, thus necessarily broken into insulated parts, be put into competition with the rich and full evolution of the *romantic* or Shakspearean drama?

It is evident, therefore, that the *romantic* or *picturesque* drama should be judged by laws and regulations of its own; that it is a distinct order of art, displaying great originality and invention, and a much more perfect and profound view of human life and its dependencies, than any anterior effort in the same department of literature; and as all the productions of our poet are exclusively referable to this order, of which he is, without dispute, the greatest master, a brief enquiry into the CONDUCT OF HIS DRAMA cannot fail to throw some light on the subject.

Of the three unities, upon which so much stress has been laid by the French critics, Shakspeare has in general, and, for the most part,

very judiciously, rejected two. One of these, the *unity of place*, was, indeed, indissolubly connected with the tragedy of the Greeks; for as the chorus was continually on their stage, no curtain could be dropped, nor was any change of scene therefore possible; but the *unity of time* was, most assuredly, neither rigidly observed by them, nor did it constitute any essential part of their system; on the contrary, Aristotle, after remarking, "that the dramatic fable should have such a length that the connexion of the circumstances may easily be remembered," immediately afterwards declares of this very length, that "as far as regards the time of the performance and the spectators, it has no relation to the poetic art," and that "as to the natural boundary of the action, *the greater it is the better, provided it be perspicuous.*"* In fact, as to *unity of place*, no rule was required, this limitation, as we have seen, being the inevitable consequence of the defective and insulated construction of their dramatic fable; and as to *unity of time*, the observation which we have just quoted from Aristotle is decisive, the circumstances attending both these *supposed* laws being such, as fully to warrant the assertion of Mr. Twining, who, commenting on the Stagyrice, observes, that "with respect to the *strict* unities of *time* and *place*, no such rules were imposed on the Greek poets by the critics, or by themselves; nor are imposed on *any* poet, either by the *nature*, or the *end*, of the dramatic imitation itself;" and we may add, that, in as far as both have been simultaneously reduced to practice, either by the Greeks themselves, or by their still more scrupulous imitators the French, have interest and probability been proportionably sacrificed.

Whether Shakspeare, therefore, acting solely from his own judgment, rejected, or, guided merely by the usage of his day, overlooked, these unities, a great point was gained for all the lovers of nature and verisimilitude. For, omitting regulations which, though generally or partially observed by the ancients, were either altogether

* Pye's Aristotle, 4to. 1792, p. 22.

arbitrary, or only locally necessary, he has adopted two of which it may be said, that neither time, circumstance, nor opinion, can diminish the utility. To *unity of action*, the indispensable requisite of every well-constituted fable, he has added, what in him is found more perfect than in any other writer, *unity of feeling*, as applicable not only to individual character, but to the prevailing tone and influence of each play. Thus, while it must be confessed that the former is, in a few instances, broken in upon, by the admission of extraneous personages or occurrences, in no respect is the latter, throughout the whole range of his productions, forgotten or violated.

It is to this sedulous attention in the preservation of *unity of feeling*, that Shakspeare owes much of his fascination and powers of impression over the hearts and minds of his audience. It has been duly panegyrised by the critics with respect to his delineation of character; but as referable to the expression and effect of an entire drama, it has been too much overlooked. What, for example, can be more distinct than the tone of feeling which pervades every portion of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*, and how consistently is this tone preserved throughout each! Through the first, from its opening to its close, breathe the freshness and the fragrance of youth and spring, their sweetness, their innocence, and alas! their transiency; while in the second, a tempest of more than midnight horror, and the still more turbulent strife of human vice and passion, howl for ever in our ears! Again, how delightful is the tender and philosophic melancholy, which steals upon us in every scene of *As You Like It*, and how contrasted with the bustle and vivacity, the light and effervescent wit which animate, and sparkle in, the dialogue of *Much Ado about Nothing*! — We consider this *unity*, by which the separate parts of a drama are rendered so strictly subservient to a single and a common object, namely, the production of a combined and uniform impression, as one of the most remarkable proofs of the depth and comprehensiveness of the mind of Shakspeare.

This excellence is the more extraordinary, as no part in the *conduct of his drama* is perhaps so prominent, as that mixture of seriousness

and mirth, of comic and tragic effect, which springs from the very structure itself of the *romantic drama*. But this interchange of emotion serves only to place the intention of the poet, and the fullness of his success, more completely in our view ; for he has almost always contrived, that the ludicrous personages of his play should give essential aid to the pre-determined effect of the composition as a whole ; and this co-operation is even most apparent, where the impression intended to be excited is the most tragic : thus the anguish which lacerates the bosom of Lear, when deserted by his children, and driven forth amid the horrors of the tempest, is augmented almost to madness by the sarcastic drollery of the fool ; developed, indeed, with an energy and strength which no other expedient could have accomplished.

These contrasts, which are, in fact, of the very essence of the *romantic drama*, as requiring richer and more varied accompaniments than the *antique* species, form, in their whole spirit and effect, a sufficient apology, were one in the least necessary, for the *tragi-comic* texture of our author's principal productions.

By embracing in one view the whole of the checkered scene of human existence, its joys and sorrows, its perpetually shifting circumstances and relations, and by blending these into one harmonious picture, Shakspeare has achieved a work to which the ancient world had nothing similar, and which, of all the efforts of human genius, demands perhaps the widest and profoundest exertion of intellect. It demands a knowledge of man, both as a genus and a species ; of man, as acting from himself, and of man in society under all its aspects and revolutions : it demands a knowledge of what has influenced and modified his character from the earliest dawn of record ; and, above all, it demands a conversancy of the most intimate kind with his constitution, moral, intellectual, and religious ; so that in detaching a portion of history for the purposes of dramatic composition, the philosopher shall be as discernible in the execution as the poet.

It is this depth and comprehension of design in the conduct of his drama, this amplitude of "a mind reflecting ages past *," which, while it has rendered Shakspeare an object of admiration to the intelligent student of nature, has occasioned him to be so often and so grossly misinterpreted by the narrow critic and the careless reader.

To these brief remarks on the *Genius* and *Conduct*, it will be necessary to add a few observations on the *Characters*, the *Passions*, the *Comic Painting*, and the *Imaginative Powers*, of his drama.

" To give a stage,
Ample, and true with life, — voice, action, age,
To story coldly told —
To raise our ancient sovereigns from their herse,
To enliven their pale trunks,"

and to make us

" Joy in their joy, and tremble at their rage,"

is, indeed, a task of the utmost magnitude and difficulty, but one in which our poet has succeeded with a felicity altogether unparalleled. His *characters* live and breathe before us; we perceive not only what they say and do, but what they feel and think; and we are tempted to believe, that like some magician of old, he possessed the art of transfusing himself into the frame, and of speaking through the organs, of those whom he wished to represent; so exactly has he drawn, without deviation from the general laws and broad tract of life, each class and condition of mankind.

Whether he delineate the possessor of a throne, or the tenant of a cottage; the warrior in battle, or the statesman in debate; youth in its fervour, or old age in its repose; guilt in agony, or innocence in

* This expression, and the verses which open some of the leading subjects of this summary, are taken from a poem "On worthy Master Shakspeare," supposed to have been the composition of Jasper Mayne, but which Mr. Godwin, if we recollect aright, for the book is not before us, is desirous of attributing, on account of its singular excellence, to the pen of Milton.— See his *Lives of E. and J. Philips*, 4to.

peace; the votaries of pleasure, or the victims of despair; we behold each character developing itself, not through the medium of self-description, but, as in actual experience, through the influence and progression of events, and through the re-action of surrounding agents. Thus, from the mutual working of conflicting interests and emotions, from their various powers of coalescence and repulsion, the characters of Shakspeare are, like those in real life, evolved with an energy and strength, with a freedom and boldness of outline which will, probably for ever, stamp them with the seal of unapproachable excellence.

Nor is he less distinguished for an illimitable sway over the *Passions*: —

“ To move
 A chilling pity —
 To strike — both joy and ire;
 To steer the affections; and by heavenly fire
 Mold us anew, —
 Yet so to temper passion, that our ears
 Take pleasure in their pain, and eyes in tears
 Both weep and smile” —

are some of the noblest attributes of the dramatic poet, and more peculiarly characteristic of Shakspeare than of any other writer. The birth and progress of the numerous passions which awaken *pity* and *terror*, he has unfolded, indeed, with such minute fidelity to nature, that it is scarcely possible, as Madame De Stael has observed, to sympathise thoroughly with Shakspeare's sufferers, without tasting also of the bitter experience of real life.

The *pathos* of Shakspeare is either simple or figurative, in accordancy with the character, and in proportion to the intensity of the feeling, from which it emanates. The sigh of suffering merit, or the pang of unrequited love, affects us most when clothed in the language of perfect simplicity; but the energy, the paroxysm of extreme sorrow, naturally bursts into figurative language, nay often demands that very play of imagery and words, for which our bard has been ignorantly condemned, but which, like laughter amid the horrors of

madness, can alone impress us with an adequately keen sense of the overwhelming agony of the soul. Of these two modes of exciting pity, we possess very striking examples in the sufferings of Katherine in *Henry the Eighth*, and in the parental afflictions of Constance in *King John*.

The excitement, indeed, of unallayed pity must necessarily either be very short, or very painful, and it has therefore been the endeavour of our dramatist, according to the language of the fine old bard just quoted,

“ so to temper passion, that our ears
Take pleasure in their pain ;”

and this he has effected, and often with great skill and judgment, by a transient intermixture of playful fancy or comic allusion, of which, instances without number are to be found dispersed throughout his plays.

Yet great as we acknowledge the influence of Shakspeare to have been, in eliciting the tears of pity and compassion, he has surpassed not only others, but himself, in the power and extent of his dominion over the sources and operation of *terror*. “ It may be said of crimes painted by Shakspeare,” remarks an accomplished critic, “ as the Bible says of Death, that he is the KING OF TERRORS * ;” an assertion fully warranted by an appeal to *Richard*, to *Lear*, to *Hamlet*, to *Macbeth*, where this soul-harrowing emotion, as derived from natural or supernatural causes, from remorseless cruelty, from phrenzy-stricken sorrow, from conscious guilt or withering fear, is depicted with an energy so awful and appalling as to blanch the cheek and chill the blood of every intellectual being. More especially do we pursue his creations with trembling hope and breathless apprehension, when he traces the wanderings of despair, when he presents to our view that “ ship-

* “ The Influence of Literature upon Society,” by Madame De Stael-Holstein, vol. i. p. 294. Translation, 2d. edit. 1812.

wreck of moral nature," in which "the storm of life surpasses its strength." *

The scenes which are necessarily required for the developement of villany and its artifices, must, of course, disclose many deeds of atrocity and vice, from which the unpolluted mind recoils with shuddering astonishment; but vividly, and justly too, as these have been portrayed by our poet, in all their native deformity, he has, with only one or two exceptions, so managed the exhibition, that, unless to very feeble minds, the impression never becomes too painful to be borne. Some qualifying property in the head or heart of the offender, or some repose from the intervention of more amiable or more cheerful characters, occurs to subdue to its proper tone what would otherwise amount to torture. Thus the disgust which would be apt to arise from contemplating the gigantic iniquity of *Richard the Third*, is corrected by an almost involuntary admiration of his intellectual vigour; and the merciless revenge of Shylock, being perpetually broken in upon by the alleviating harmonies of love and pity in the characters of those who surround him, passes not beyond the due limits of tragic emotion. †

* "The Influence of Literature upon Society," by Madame De Stael-Holstein, vol. i. p. 305. Translation, 2d edit. 1812.

† Of the soothing and delightful effect of this *contrasted repose*, Homer, more than any other writer, affords us abundant examples; perpetually introducing, in the midst of slaughter and contention, similes fraught with pathetic incident or picturesque description. One of these, for the purpose of being followed by an imitation which, in my opinion, greatly transcends the original, I shall now transcribe. The Grecian bard, after mentioning the fall of Simoisius, slain by Ajax, in the bloom of youth and beauty, thus proceeds: —

" ————— Him, what time she went
From Ida, with her parents to attend
Their flocks on Simois' side, his mother bore,
And thence they named him. But his days were few,
Too few to recompense the care that rear'd
His comely growth; for Ajax, mighty Chief,
Received him on his pointed spear, and, pierced
Through breast and shoulder, in the dust he fell.

The inimitable felicity, indeed, with which Shakspeare has intermingled the finest chords of *pity* and of *terror*, such as we listen to, with unsated rapture in his *Romeo*, his *Lear*, and his *Othello*, has been a subject of eulogium to thousands, but never can it meet, from mortal tongue, with praise of corresponding worth. For who shall paint the beauty of those transitions, when on a night of horror breaks the first bright ray of heaven, the dawn of light and hope; when, like the sounds of an Æolian harp amid the pauses of a tempest, the still soft voice of love succeeds the tumult of despair, and whispers to the troubled spirit accents of mercy, peace, and pardon?

So, nourish'd long in some well-water'd spot,
Crown'd with green boughs, the smooth-skin'd poplar falls,
Doom'd by the builder to supply with wheels
Some splendid chariot, on the bank it lies,
A lifeless trunk, to parch in summer airs."

Cowper, Iliad IV.

Tender and beautiful as this must be deemed, greatly am I mistaken, if the following lines be not preferred. They are taken from an *unpublished* poem, entitled *Alfred*, the composition of Mr. *John Fitchett* of Warrington, whom I have the pleasure of personally knowing, and who, I trust, will pardon the liberty thus assumed, of endeavouring to accelerate the publication of his work, by the production of one of its numerous beauties. *Alfred* consists of twenty books, ten of which, in a printed form, lie now before me. In the eighth book, *Berthun*, a brave and youthful thane, is slain by the pagan *Amund*: —

" ————— Down the hero fell,
Riv'n through the brain. Sleep overcast his eyes.
Full many a tear his early fate shall mourn
Where on the woody side of Axham's vale
His pleasant dwelling stands. In vain shall look
At dawn or eve his tender wife to hail
His glad return, but hopeless to her heart
Press his fair image in her smiling babe.
He fell, as by some murm'ring riv'let's side
The tow'ring poplar, whose broad branches shade
A rural cottage, guardian of its peace,
Sinks crashing, and uptears the flow'ry bank,
Whelm'd by the tempest; the defenceless cot
Howls to the moaning wind: the birds behold
Their nests, their young, in ruin lost: the brook
Rolls o'er the tree whose image long it loved."

It is perhaps only of Shakspeare that it can be said with truth, that his *comic* possesses the same unrivalled merit as his *tragic* drama. The force and versatility of his *painting* in this department, its richness, its depth, and its expression, and, more than all, the originality and fecundity of invention which it every where exhibits, astonish, and almost overwhelm the mind in its endeavour to form an estimate of powers so gigantic, and which may not be altogether incommensurate with its scope and comprehensiveness. Whether we consider his delineations of this kind as the product of pure fiction, or founded on the costume of his age, they alike delight us by their novelty and their adhesion to nature. *Falstaff* and *Parolles* are, in many respects, as much the birth of fancy as *Caliban* or *Ariel*; but being strictly confined within the pale of humanity, and displaying all its features with living truth and distinctness, the *inventive felicity* of their *combination* is apt to escape us through our familiarity with its component parts. His *Fools*, or *Clowns*, on the contrary, were, in his time, of daily occurrence, and not only to be found in the court of the monarch, and the castle of the baron, but in the hall of the squire, and even beneath the roof of the churchman; yet, from comparing what history has recorded of this motley tribe with the spirited sketches of our author, how has he heightened their wit and sarcasm!—to such a degree, indeed, that they have frequently become in his hands personages of poetic growth, wild and grotesque, it is true, yet powerfully original.

This pre-eminence of Shakspeare in the characterisation of his fools probably led to their dramatic extinction; for it must have been found very difficult to support their tone and spirit after such a model. Beaumont and Fletcher, it has been observed, have but rarely introduced them; Ben Jonson and Massinger never*; and yet the *court-fool* had not ceased to exist in the reign of Charles the First, nor the *domestic* until the commencement of the eighteenth century. †

* Douce's Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 327.

† Of court-fools, it is observed by Mr. Douce, that "Muckle John, the fool of Charles the First, and the successor of Archee Armstrong, is perhaps the last regular personage of the kind." — Illustrations, vol. ii. p. 308.

Another of the great distinctions which have elevated Shakspeare so completely above the *dramatic* class of poets, is the splendour and infinity of his *imagination* —

“ To out-run hasty time, retrieve the fates,
Roll back the heavens, blow ope the iron gates
Of death and Lethe — by art to learn
The physiognomy of shades, and give
Them sudden birth — ‘and’ from ‘his’ lofty throne,
Create and rule a world, and work upon
Mankind by secret engines,”

was deemed, even by his contemporaries, the peculiar destiny of our bard; a destination that has been still more thoroughly felt and acknowledged by succeeding ages, and by which, without sacrificing any of the more legitimate provinces of the drama, he has acquired for his poetry that stamp of glowing inspiration, which more than places it on a level with the daring flights of Homer, of Dante, or of Milton; while, at the same time, there exclusively belongs to him an insinuating loveliness of fancy that endears him to our feelings, and brings with it a recognition of that visionary happiness which charmed our earliest youth, when all around us breathed enchantment, and the heart alone responded to the fairy melodies of love and hope.

What contrast, for instance, of poetic power has ever exceeded that which we experience in passing from the mysterious horrors of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, from the visitations of the midnight spectre, and the unhallowed rites of witchcraft, to the sportive revelry of the tripping elves, and the exquisite delights of Ariel; from the fiend-like character of Iago, from the soul-harrowing distraction of Lear, and the unearthly wildness of Edgar, to that music of paradise which falls melting from the tongue of Juliet or Miranda!

We also find an epitaph by Dean Swift, on Dicky Pierce, the Earl of Suffolk's fool, who was buried in Berkeley church-yard, June 18. 1728, in the same ingenious essay. Vide *Dissertation on the Clowns and Fools of Shakspeare*, — *Illustrations*, vol. ii. p. 309.

Were we to lengthen this summary by any dissertation on the *morality* of our author's drama, it might justly be considered as a work of supererogation. So completely, indeed, does this, the most valuable result of composition, pervade every portion of his dramatic writings, that we can scarcely open a page of his best plays without being forcibly struck by its lessons of virtue and utility ; such as are applicable, not only to extraordinary occasions, but to the common business and routine of life ; and such as, while they must make every individual better acquainted with his own nature and conditional destiny, are calculated, beyond any other productions of unrevealed wisdom, to improve that nature, and to render that destiny more happy and exalted.

Still less is it necessary to comment on the *faults* of Shakspeare, for they lie immediately on the surface. When we add, that some coarsenesses and indelicacies which, however, as they excite no passion and flatter no vice, are, in a moral light, not injurious ; some instances of an injudicious play on words, and a few violations, not of essential, but merely of technical, costume, form their chief amount, no little surprise, it is possible, may be excited ; but let us recollect, that many of the defects which prejudice and ignorance have attributed to Shakspeare, have, on being duly weighed and investigated, assumed the character of positive excellences. Among these, for example, it will be sufficient to mention the composite or mixed nature of his drama, and his general neglect of the unities of time and place, features in the conduct of his plays which, though they have for a long period heaped upon his head a torrent of contemptuous abuse, are, at length, acknowledged to have laid the foundation, and to have furnished the noblest model of a dramatic literature, in its principles and spirit infinitely more profound and comprehensive than that which has descended to us from the shores of Greece.

It was in reference to the narrow and mistaken views which were once entertained of the genius of Shakspeare ; it was in refutation of the calumnies of Rymer, and the senseless invective of Voltaire, who had charged us with an extravagant admiration of this *barbarian*,

that Mr. Morgan, forty years ago, stood forward the avowed champion, and, we may add, one of the most eloquent defenders which his country has yet produced, of *England's* calumniated *Bard*.

Speaking of the magic influence which our poet almost invariably exerts over his auditors, he remarks, that "on such an occasion, a fellow, like *Rymer*, waking from his trance, shall lift up his Constable's staff, and charge this great Magician, this daring *practicer of arts inhibited*, in the name of *Aristotle*, to surrender; whilst *Aristotle* himself, disowning his wretched officer, would fall prostrate at his feet and acknowledge his supremacy. — 'O supreme of Dramatic excellence! (*might he say*) not to me be imputed the insolence of fools. The bards of *Greece* were confined within the narrow circle of the Chorus, and hence they found themselves constrained to practice, for the most part, the precision, and copy the details of nature. I followed them, and knew not that a larger circle might be drawn, and the drama extended to the whole reach of human genius. Convinced, I see that a more compendious *nature* may be obtained; a nature of *effects* only, to which neither the relations of place, or continuity of time, are always essential. Nature, condescending to the faculties and apprehensions of man, has drawn through human life a regular chain of visible causes and effects: But Poetry delights in surprize, conceals her steps, seizes at once upon the heart, and obtains the sublime of things without betraying the rounds of her ascent: True Poesy is *magic*, not *nature*; an effect from causes hidden or unknown. To the Magician I prescribed no laws; his law and his power are one; his power is his law. — If his end is obtained, who shall question his course? Means, whether apparent or hidden, are justified in Poesy by success; but then most perfect and most admirable when most concealed.' —

" 'Yes,' whatever may be the neglect of some, or the censure of others, there are those, who firmly believe that this wild, this uncultivated Barbarian has not yet obtained one half of his fame; and who trust that some new Stagyrte will arise, who, instead of pecking at the surface of things, will enter into the inward soul of his compo-

sitions, and expel, by the force of congenial feelings, those foreign impurities which have stained and disgraced his page. And as to those *spots* which still remain, they may perhaps become invisible to those who shall seek them thro' the medium of his beauties, instead of looking for those beauties, as is too frequently done, thro' the smoke of some real or imputed obscurity. When the hand of time shall have brushed off his present Editors and Commentators, and when the very name of *Voltaire*, and even the memory of the language in which he has written, shall be no more, the *Apalachian* mountains, the banks of the *Ohio*, and the plains of *Sciola* shall resound with the accents of this Barbarian: In his native tongue he shall roll the genuine passions of nature; nor shall the griefs of *Lear* be alleviated, or the charms and wit of *Rosalind* be abated by time."*

Since this eloquently prophetic passage was written, how has the fame of Shakspeare increased! Not only in England has the growth of a more enlightened criticism operated in his favour, but on the continent an enthusiasm for his genius has been kindled, which, we may venture to say, will never be extinguished. In Germany, the efforts of Herder †, of Goethe ‡, of Tieck §, and, above all, of Augustus William Schlegel, the "*new Stagyrte*," as he may justly be termed, the best critic on, and the best translator, of our author ||, have, as it were, naturalised the poet; and if in France the labours of Le Mercier and Ducis have failed to produce a similar effect, yet a taste for Shakspeare in the original has been very powerfully heightened by the nervous and elegant compositions of De Stael.

Nor has Europe alone borne testimony to the progress of his reputation; not twenty years had passed over the glowing predictions of Morgan, when the first transatlantic edition of Shakspeare appeared

* Essay on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff, pp. 69, 70, 71. and 64, 65.

† In his *Blättern von deutscher Art und Kunst*.

‡ In his *Wilhelm Meister*.

§ *Poetisches Journal*, 1800.

|| For just and discriminative characters of Schlegel and his writings, see the Germany of Madame De Stael, and the Monthly and Edinburgh Reviews.

at Philadelphia*; nor is it too much to believe that, ere another century elapse, the plains of Northern America, and even the unexplored wilds of Australasia, shall be as familiar with the fictions of our poet, as are now the vallies of his native Avon, or the statelier banks of the Thames.

It is, indeed, a most delightful consideration for every lover and cultivator of our literature, and one which should excite, amongst our authors, an increased spirit of emulation, that the language in which they write, is destined to be that of so large a portion of the new world; a field of glory to which the genius of Shakspeare will assuredly give an unperishable permanency; for the diffusion and durability of his fame are likely to meet with no limit save that which circumscribes the globe, and closes the existence of time.

* In the year 1795. Printed and sold by Bioren and Madan. — Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 149.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BRIEF VIEW OF DRAMATIC POETRY AND ITS CULTIVATORS, DURING SHAKSPEARE'S CONNECTION WITH THE STAGE.

THAT the master-spirit which Shakspeare exhibited in the eyes of his contemporaries ; that the great improvements which he had made on the drama of Peele and Marlowe, and their associates, should excite the wonder, and call forth the emulation of his age, were events naturally to be expected. He was accordingly the founder of a school of dramatic art which continued to flourish until extinguished by those convulsions that destroyed the monarch, and overturned the government of the country, — a school to which we have since had nothing similar, or even approximating in excellence.

The fate, however, of the leader and his disciples has been widely different. During the life-time of Shakspeare, the spirit of competition forbade an open acknowledgment of his pre-eminence, and those who had run the race of glory with him, and outlived his day, had influence sufficient, either from personal interest, or the charm of novelty, to procure a more frequent representation of their own productions, however inferior, than of those of their departed luminary. But, when the grave had closed alike on their great exemplar and on themselves, apart, indeed, was their allotment in the estimation of the living ; for while the former sprang from the tomb with fresh energy and beauty, over the latter dropped, comparatively, the mantle of oblivion ! Yet, not for ever !

Though lost, for a time, in the effulgence of that lustre which has continued to brighten ever since its revivescence, they have nevertheless, through an intrinsic though more subdued brilliancy of their own, begun, at length, to emerge into day, and their demand upon the justice of criticism, for their station and their fame, is loud and imperative.

Let us, therefore, as far as our brief limits will permit, and in furtherance of what has been so judiciously commenced, co-operate in the endeavour to apportion to these immediate successors of our matchless bard, the honour due to their exertions. If correctly attributed, it cannot be trifling, and may assist in forming a just notion of the most valuable period of our dramatic poesy.

We shall commence with those who, in their own age, were deemed the rivals, and followed, indeed, fast upon the footsteps of Shakspeare, hesitating not to give priority of notice to the name of JOHN FLETCHER, who, though hitherto inseparably united in fame and publication with his friend Francis Beaumont, deserves, both from the comparative number and value of his pieces, a separate and exclusive consideration.

Of the fifty-three plays which have been ascribed to these poetical friends, it appears that not more than nine or ten were the joint productions of Beaumont and Fletcher; in still fewer was he assisted by Massinger, Rowley, and Field, and the ample residue, independent of two pieces now lost, and known to have been his sole composition, was therefore the entire product of Fletcher's genius.* With this curious fact we were first made acquainted by Sir Aston Cokain, who, speaking of the thirty-four plays of these poets, as published in the folio of 1647, informs us, that

— “ Beaumont of those many writ in few;
And Massinger in other few: the main
Being sole issues of sweet Fletcher's brain.”†

In fact, as Sir Aston has elsewhere told us‡, the bulk of the collection was written after Beaumont's death, which took place in 1615; the fecundity of Fletcher being so great, that in the interval between that event and his own decease in 1625, he had produced

* Vide Malone's Dryden, vol. i. part ii. p. 101.

† Verses addressed to Mr. Humphrey Mosely, published in his Poems, Epigrams, &c. 1658.

‡ Verses addressed to Mr. Charles Cotton.

nearly forty dramas, besides some which were left in an unfinished state, and completed by Shirley.

It is also necessary to add, that the ten plays which issued from the firm of Beaumont and Fletcher are, by no means, the best of the entire series: they are *Philaster*,—*The Maids Tragedy*,—*King and No King*,—*The Knight of the Burning Pestle*,—*Cupid's Revenge*,—*The Coxcomb*,—*The Captain*,—*The Honest Man's Fortune*,—*The Scornful Lady*, and *The False One**; productions, in allusion to which it has been said, and perhaps with no great injustice, that “if the plays of Beaumont were thrown out of the collection by Beaumont and Fletcher, the remainder would form a richer ore.” †

Warrantable, therefore, upon this statement, must it be deemed, should we now drop the name of Beaumont, after observing, that a portion of the merits and defects of Fletcher may be attributed to his friend, and that, in the estimation of Ben Jonson, (on this subject the most unexceptionable testimony,) he possessed, beyond all others of his age, a sound and correct judgment. ‡

The characteristic of Fletcher, in the serious department of his art, was a peculiar mastery in the delineation of the softer passions, especially of love. There is a sweetly pensive tone in many of his pictures of this kind, which steals upon the mind with the most insinuating charm, producing that species of pathos which soothes while it gently agitates the soul; a feeling too sad and melancholy for the genius of comedy, and too mild and subdued for that of tragedy, but admirably adapted to an intermediate style of composition, of which he has given us some happy instances under the title of tragi-comedy. It must be confessed, however, that an impression of feebleness and effeminacy, a sickliness of sentiment, and a

* See Malone's Dryden, vol. i. part ii. p. 101. note.

† Monthly Review, new series, vol. lxxxi. p. 126.

‡ Malone's Dryden, vol. i. part ii. p. 100.—Fuller tells us, in his quaint but emphatic manner, that Beaumont brought “the ballast of judgment,” and Fletcher “the sail of phantasia.”—Worthies, part ii. p. 288.

want of dignity in the pity which he endeavours to excite, but too often accompany his efforts, even in this his favourite province.

Yet not unfrequently did Fletcher aspire to the loftiest heights of the dramatic muse ; to the terrible, to the wildly awful, to the agony of grief. But here he sank beneath the genius of Shakspeare ; in his endeavour to be great, there is a labour and contortion which frequently betrays the struggle to have been painfully arduous ; an impression which we never receive from the drama of his predecessor, who seems to attain the highest elevation with an ease and spontaneity of movement, which suggests an idea, approaching to sublimity, of the fulness and extent of his resources. But, as an elegant critic has observed, Fletcher was “ too mistrustful of Nature ; he always goes a little on one side of her. Shakspeare chose her without a reserve : and had riches, power, understanding, and long-life, with her, for a dowry.” *

Very different, however, was the result of his efforts, when he touched the gaieties of life ; for in this path, he moves with a grace and legerity which has not often been equalled. He displays, it is true, little humour, and consequently not much strength of character ; but we are told, on good authority †, that no poet before him had painted the conversation of the gentlemen of his day with such fidelity and truth ; a declaration which impresses us with an high opinion of the vivacity and intellectual smartness of the dialogue of that age ; for there is in the representation of Fletcher an almost perpetual effervescency and corruscation of wit and repartee.

The imagination of Fletcher, when not straining after the eagle wing of the bard of Avon, was fertile and felicitous in an extraordinary degree. The romantic, the fanciful, the playful, are epithets peculiarly descriptive of its range and tone, within which he frequently emulates with success the excellence of his great master.

* Lamb's Specimens of English Dramatic Poets, p. 409.

† Dryden on Dramatic Poesy.

There appears, indeed, in several of his pieces, an evident intention of entering the lists with Shakspeare. Thus the exquisitely pleasing character of Euphrasia, under the disguise of a page, in *Philaster*, was undoubtedly intended to rival the similar concealments in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in *As You Like It*, in *Cymbeline*, and in *Twelfth Night*. Amoret, in *The Faithful Shepherdess*, is a delightful counterpart of Perdita, in *The Winter's Tale*, and throughout *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and especially in the character of the Jailor's daughter, there is a striking, and, in general, a very happy effort made, to copy the express colouring of Shakspeare's style, and his mode of representing the wanderings of a disordered intellect.

But when, regardless of the hazardous nature of the experiment, he attempts, in his *Sea Voyage*, to emulate the magic structure and wild imagery of *The Tempest*, his ambition serves but to show, that he had formed a very inadequate estimate of his own powers.

Yet the failure in such an enterprise can reflect no disgrace, and from what has been said, it must necessarily be inferred, that we consider Fletcher as holding a very high, if not the highest rank, in the school of Shakspeare.

How much is it to be lamented then, that excellence such as this should have been polluted by the grossest spirit of licentiousness; for it would appear, from the tenour of many of our author's plays, that, in his vocabulary, sensuality and sensibility were synonymous terms; so nakedly and ostentatiously has he brought forward the most immodest impulses of sexual appetite. Shakspeare may be, and is, occasionally, coarse and unreserved in his language; but, if compared with Fletcher, the nudity of his expressions is like the marble statue of a vestal, when contrasted with the wanton exposure of a prostitute.

As we wish to be spared the pain of reverting to such a subject, for which the age of Fletcher and his successors offers, unfortunately, but too many opportunities, it shall here be closed with a single expression of regret, that a department of poetry which, in itself,

seems better calculated than any other to serve the cause of virtue, should be degraded to a purpose thus base and unworthy. *

On a level with, if not one degree above the writings of Fletcher, follow the purer and more chastised productions of PHILIP MASSINGER, a poet of unwearied vigour and consummate elegance. That he had, in conjunction with others, composed for the stage some years anterior to the death of Shakspeare, there is every reason to conclude; for his first arrival in London, in 1606, was, we are told, under necessitous circumstances, and with the view of dedicating his talents to dramatic literature; and, though his *Virgin Martyr*, his earliest *publication*, did not appear until 1622, it was a notorious fact, that he had written in conjunction both with *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*. † It is almost certain, indeed, from what Mr. Gifford has stated, that, in the interval just mentioned, he had brought on the stage not less than eight or ten plays. ‡

The English drama never suffered a greater loss, (for all Shakspeare's pieces have descended to us,) than in the havoc which time and negligence have committed among the works of Massinger; for of thirty-eight plays attributed to his pen, only eighteen have been preserved!

Massinger, like Fletcher, pursued the path in which Shakspeare had preceded him with such imperishable glory; but he wants the tenderness and wit of the former, and that splendour of imagination and that dominion over the passions, which characterise the latter.

* Would that the Commentators on Shakspeare had pursued the plan which Mr. Gifford has adopted in his edition of Massinger, who, speaking of the freedoms of his author, declares, that "those who examine the notes with a prurient eye, will find no great gratification of their licentiousness. I have called in no 'one' (he adds) to drivel out gratuitous obscenities in uncouth language; no 'one' to ransack the annals of a brothel for secrets 'better hid:' where I wished not to detain the reader, I have been silent, and instead of aspiring to the fame of a licentious commentator, sought only for the quiet approbation with which the father or the husband may reward the faithful editor."—Massinger, vol. i. pp. lxxxiii. lxxxiv.

† Gifford's Massinger, vol. i. pp. xii. xiv. Introduction.

‡ Ibid. vol. i. pp. xviii.—xx.

He has, however, qualities of his own, sufficiently great and attractive, to gift him with the envied lot of being contemplated, in union with these two bards, as one of the chief pillars and supporters of the *Romantic drama*.

He exhibits, in the first place, a perfectibility, both in diction and versification, of which we have, in dramatic poesy at least, no corresponding example. There is a transparency and perspicuity in the texture of his composition, a sweetness, harmony, and ductility, together with a blended strength and ease in the structure of his metre, which, in his best performances, delight, and never satiate the ear.

To this, in some degree technical merit, must be added a spirit of commanding *eloquence*, a dignity and force of thought, which, while they approach the precincts of sublimity, and indicate great depth and clearness of intellect, show, by the nervous elegance of language in which they are clothed, a combination and comprehension of talent of very unfrequent occurrence.

These qualities are, it must be allowed, not peculiar to dramatic poetry; but when we find, that to their possession are added a powerful discrimination and marked consistency of character, no inconsiderable display of humour, much fertility of invention in the preparation and developement of his incidents, and an unprecedented degree of grace and amenity in the construction of several of his comic scenes, together with a fund of ethic knowledge, an exquisite sense of moral feeling, and above all, a glow of piety, in many instances amounting to sublimity, we willingly ascribe to Massinger originality and dramatic excellence of no inferior order.

But when Dr. Ferriar, closing his *Essay on the Writings of Massinger*, asserts that he "ranks immediately under Shakspeare himself*," we must crave permission to hesitate for a moment, in reference to the enchanting tenderness of Fletcher.

* Gifford's Massinger, vol. i. *Essay on the Writings of Massinger*, p. cxxvi.

"If there be a class of writers, of which, above all others," observes Mr. Gilchrist, "England may justly be proud, it is of those, for the stage, coeval with and immediately succeeding Shakspeare *;" an observation which the names alone of Fletcher and Massinger would sufficiently justify; but when to these we are enabled to add such fellow-artists as Ford, Webster, Middleton, &c. we are astonished that even the talents of Shakspeare should, for so long a period, have eclipsed their fame.

FORD's first appearance as an author, was in a copy of verses to the memory of the Earl of Devonshire, in 1606, and his earliest play of which we have the date of performance, was "A Bad Beginning makes a Good Ending," acted at court, in 1613†; but it is probable that the three plays mentioned with this, in Mr. Warburton's Collection, and like it, never published, and now lost‡, were likewise early, and perhaps anterior compositions.

As it was the fashion, at this period, for dramatic writers to commence their course in conjunction with others, we find Ford accepting frequent assistance from his friends: thus *The Sun's Darling*, *The Fairy Knight*, and *The Bristowe Merchant*, were written in conjunction with Decker; and *The Witch of Edmonton*, with the aid of both Decker and Rowley.

Of the pieces which were exclusively the product of his own genius, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, though not published the first, was the first written, and was succeeded by *The Lover's Melancholy*, *The Broken Heart*, *Love's Sacrifice*, *Perkin Warbeck*, *The Fancies Chast and Noble*, and *The Ladies Tryal*.

Ford possesses nothing of the energy and majesty of Massinger, and but little of the playful gaiety and picturesque fancy of Fletcher, yet scarcely Shakspeare himself has exceeded him in the excitement of pathetic emotion. Of this, his two Tragedies of *'Tis Pity She's a*

* Letter to William Gifford, Esq. on the late edition of Ford's Plays, 8vo. 1811, p. 7.

† Vide Chalmers's Biographical Dictionary, vol. xiv. p. 465.

‡ Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxxxv. p. 219.

Whore, and the *Broken Heart*, bear the most overpowering testimony. Though too much loaded in their fable with a wildness and horror often felt as repulsive, they are noble specimens of dramatic genius ; and who that has a heart to feel, or an eye to weep, can, in the first of these productions, view even the unhallowed loves of Giovanni and Annabella ; or in the second, the hapless and unmerited fates of Calantha and Penthea, with a cheek unbathed in tears !

JOHN WEBSTER, whom we shall place immediately after Ford, as next, perhaps, in talent, resembled him in a predilection for the terrible and the strange, but with a cast of character still more lawless and impetuous. Of the six plays which he produced, two were written in conjunction with William Rowley, and are comedies ; the remaining four, containing three tragedies, and a tragi-comedy, are the issue of his unaided pen. The tragedies, especially *The White Devil*, or *Vittoria Corombona*, first printed in 1612, and *The Dutchesse of Malfy*, in 1623, are very striking, though, in many respects, very eccentric proofs of dramatic vigour.

It appears, however, from the dedication to the "*White Devil*," that our author was well acquainted with the laws of the ancient drama, and that "willingly, and not ignorantly," he adopted the Romantic or Shakspearean form. The last paragraph of this address is a pleasing instance of his diffidence, liberality, and good sense : — "For mine own part," says he, "I have ever truly cherished my good opinion of other men's worthy labours, especially of that full and heightened stile of master Chapman ; the laboured and understanding works of master Jonson ; the no less worthy composures of the both worthily excellent master Beaumont, and master Fletcher ; and lastly, (without wrong last to be named,) the right happy and copious industry of master Shakspeare, master Decker, and master Heywood, wishing what I write may be read by their light ; protesting that, in the strength of mine own judgment, I know them so worthy, that though I rest silent in my own work, yet to most of their's I dare (without flattery) fix that of Martial : —

——— “non norunt hæc monumenta mori.” *

The silence which modesty dictated to Webster, ought long ago to have been broken, by a declaration, that he was fully entitled to a niche in the same temple of Fame with those whom he has here commemorated. In his pictures of wretchedness and despair, he has introduced touches of expression which curdle the very blood with terror, and make the hair stand erect. Of this, the death of *The Dutchesse of Malfy*, with all its preparatory horrors, is a most distinguishing proof. The fifth act of his *Vittoria Corombona* shows, also, with what occasional skill he could imbibe the imagination of Shakspeare, particularly where its features seem to breathe a more than earthly wildness. The danger, however, which almost certainly attends such an aspiration after, what may be called inimitable excellence, Webster has not escaped; for, where his master moves free and ethereal, an interpreter for other worlds, he but too often seems laboriously striving to break from terrestrial fetters; and, when liberated, he is, not unfrequently, “an extravagant and erring spirit.” Yet, with all their faults, his tragedies are, most assuredly, stamped with, and consecrated by, the seal of genius.

Not less than twenty-four plays are ascribed to THOMAS MIDDLETON, of which, sixteen at least, appear to owe their existence entirely to himself: the rest are written in conjunction with Jonson, Fletcher, Massinger, Decker, and Rowley. Middleton, it is probable, began to compose for the stage shortly after Shakspeare †, for one of his pieces was *published* as early as 1602, and eight had passed the press before 1612. His talents were principally directed towards comedy, only two tragedies, *The Changeling*, and *Women beware Women*, and two tragi-comedies, *The Phœnix* and *The Witch*, being included in the list of his productions.

Humour, wit, and character, though in a degree inferior to that

* Vide Ancient British Drama, vol. iii. p. 3.

† *The Old Law*, in which he assisted Rowley, was acted in its original state, and before it was re-touched by Massinger, in 1599.

which distinguishes the preceding poets, are to be found in the comedy of Middleton ; and, occasionally, a pleasing interchange of elegant imagery and tender sentiment. His tragedy is not devoid of pathos, though possessing little dignity or elevation ; but there is, in many of his plays, and especially in the tragi-comedy of *The Witch*, a strength and compass of imagination which entitle him to a very respectable rank among the cultivators of the *Romantic* drama.

A more than common celebrity has attached itself to this last-named composition, in consequence of the conjecture of Mr. Steevens, that it preceded *Macbeth*, and afforded to Shakspeare the *prima stamina* of the supernatural machinery of that admirable play. This may readily be granted, without aspersing the originality of the Bard of Avon ; for if we except the mere idea of the introduction of such an agency into dramatic poetry, there is little beside a few verbal forms of incantation, and two or three metrical invocations, of singular notoriety perhaps at the period, which can be considered as betraying any marks of imitation. In every other respect, affinity or resemblance there is none ; for the Witches of Middleton and of Shakspeare are beings essentially distinct both in origin and office. The former are creatures of flesh and blood, possessing power, indeed, to inflict disease, and to execute more than common mischief, but very subordinate instruments of evil, when compared with the spiritual essence and mysterious sublimity of the *Weird Sisters*, who are the authors not only of nameless deeds, but who are nameless themselves, who float upon the midnight storm, direct the elemental strife, and, more than this, who wield the passions and the thoughts of man.

The hags of Middleton are, however, drawn with a bold and creative pencil, and seem to take a middle station between the terrific sisterhood of Shakspeare, and the traditionary witch of the country-village. They are pictures full of fancy, but not kept sufficiently aloof from the ludicrous and familiar.

On the same elevation with Middleton, as to dramatic merit, may we place the name of THOMAS DECKER, who, if he has not equalled

his contemporary in the faculty of imagination, has, in some instances, exceeded him, in the vigorous conception of his characters, and the skilful management of his fable. So early as 1600, had he published one of his best dramas, under the title of *Old Fortunatus*, which, together with *The Honest Whore*, printed in 1604, very adequately prove that his talents were of no inferior class ; the character of *Orleans* in the first of these plays, and that of *Bellafront* in the second, exhibiting not only many beautiful ideas in richly poetical language, but many indications of an original and discriminative mind.

The fertility of Decker was great ; for independent of numerous pieces of a miscellaneous kind, he wrote or contributed to write, not fewer than thirty-two plays. Several of these, however, were never printed, and are not now, probably, in existence ; and two which were once in Mr. Warburton's possession, perished with his ill-fated collection. There is reason to suppose that twelve, if not fifteen, originated solely with himself, and for the remainder, his associates were Middleton, Massinger, and Ford, Webster, Day, and Rowley. With the latter and Ford, he wrote *The Witch of Edmonton*, the execution of which shows, that, though he has availed himself, with much effect, of the common superstitions connected with his subject, he was, in point of fancy, inferior to Middleton, the *Witch* of this triumvirate being little more than the ignorant and self-deluded victim of the folly of the times, then, under the shape of decrepid and female old age, to be found in almost every hamlet in the kingdom.

Decker has been more known to posterity by his connection and quarrel with Ben Jonson, than by his own works, a fate which has also obscured the writings and reputation of JOHN MARSTON, who, in his life-time, was not undeservedly celebrated both as a dramatic and a satiric poet. In the former capacity he produced eight plays, of which the two parts of *Antonio and Mellida*, *The Insatiate Countess*, and *The Malcontent*, published as early as 1602, 1603, and 1604, reflect great credit on his abilities. These, and indeed all his dramas, give evidence of great wealth and vigour of description, of much

felicity in expression, and of much passionate eloquence; nor are his characters raw or indistinct sketches, but highly coloured and well supported. The compliment, however, which some modern writers have paid him, on the score of chastity of thought and style, is, we are sorry to say, most unmerited; for neither is it supported by the opinion of his contemporaries, nor by the testimony of his own writings. So greatly was he a sinner in this respect, that an old satirist says of him, —

“ Tut, what cares he for modest, close couched terms,
Cleanly to gird our looser libertines?
Give him plain-naked words, stripped from their shirts,
That might beseem plain-dealing Aretine.” *

If fecundity were a test of genius, no writer, with the exception of Lopez de Vega, would stand upon such elevated ground as THOMAS HEYWOOD, who tells us, in the Preface to his *English Traveller*, a tragi-comedy, that it was “one reserved amongst 220 in which he had either an entire hand or at the least a main finger;” a degree of industry and fertility which may justly excite our astonishment.

It is perhaps equally extraordinary, that, in periods so late as the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles, and when the art of printing was in full activity, only twenty-six of this prodigious number should have issued from the press, a paucity for which their author accounts, in the preface just quoted, in the following manner: “One reason,” he avers, “is that many of them, by shifting and change of companies, have been negligently lost; others of them are still retained in the hands of some actors, who think it against their peculiar profit to have them come in print; and a third, that it never was any great ambition in me, to bee, in this kind, voluminously read.”

This apathy or modesty has, no doubt, deprived us of some interesting plays; for though Heywood had little of the enthusiasm or

* *Returne from Parnassus*, act i. sc. 2.—Vide *Ancient British Drama*, vol. i. p. 49.

fancy of the genuine poet, there are in several of the pieces which remain, an unaffected ease and simplicity, and a power of touching the heart, which merit preservation in no common degree. He abounds, too, in pictures of domestic life very minutely finished, correct without being cold, and effective without being overcharged. To his skill in exciting pathetic emotion, his tragedy entitled *A Woman killed with Kindness* bears the most impressive testimony.

Heywood, as may be conceived, began early, and continued long to write. Of the dramas which are left us, the first published, was his *Death of Robert Earle of Huntington*, dated 1601, and the last, the tragi-comedy of *Fortune by Land and Sea*, dated 1655. He was occasionally assisted by Rowley, Brome, &c.

Greatly superior in poetic force and vigour to Heywood, but equally inferior as to truth of dramatic imitation, we have now to mention the venerably epic name of GEORGE CHAPMAN, the translator of Homer, and the friend of Shakspeare and Jonson, with whom, as a writer for the stage, he was nearly coeval.

Though the author of more comedies than tragedies, the genius of Chapman was infinitely better calculated for the latter province. Many beauties, it must be granted, are to be found in some of his comedies, especially in his *All Fools*, and *Widdowe's Tears*, but they stand aloof from the character of the department, in which they are included. It is, in fact, in the lofty and heroic drama, in the more elevated and descriptive parts of tragedy, that he excels; in a grandeur often wild and irregular, but highly animated and striking. Thus the two tragedies, entitled *Bussy D'Ambois*, breathe a chivalric spirit truly inspiring, and, however censured by Dryden* for tumour and incorrectness of style, excite in the reader a sensation of involuntary transport. It will readily be admitted, however, that such a mode of composition is by no means adapted to dramatic purposes, and presents no safe or legitimate model. Chapman wrote

* In his Dedication to the Spanish Fryer.

sixteen plays, besides assisting Jonson and Marston in *Eastward Hoe*, and Shirley in at least two of his productions.

With nearly all the poets whom we have hitherto mentioned did WILLIAM ROWLEY unite in the composition of various pieces for the stage; namely, with Massinger, Middleton, and Heywood, Ford, Decker, and Webster, and, it has even been said, with Shakspeare, in a play entitled *The Birth of Merlin*. For this last association, however, there appears to be no other foundation than the bookseller's assertion, who printed this play in 1662, and which is totally unsupported by any other evidence external or internal.

But Rowley wanted not talent and originality for independent exertion, and five dramas out of nine which have been attributed solely to his pen, have reached us from the press. That a writer who was deemed a worthy assistant in such plays as *The Witch of Edmonton*, *The Thracian Wonder*, and *The Spanish Gipsy*, must have possessed no very inferior abilities, can admit of little doubt, and is confirmed indeed by his own exclusive compositions; for *A Match at Midnight*, and *All's Lost by Lust*, the former in the comic, and the latter in the tragic, department of his art, evince, in incident and humour, in character and in pathos, powers which repel the charge of mediocrity. Upon the whole, however, we consider him as ranking last in the roll of worthies who have thus far graced our pages.

Among the crowd of poets who commenced writers for the stage during the dramatic life-time of Shakspeare, and who were peculiarly disciples of the same school, we have now, in our opinion, noticed the most eminent; and if we add to the list, the names of TAILOR, TOMKIS, and TOURNEUR, the first the author of *The Hog hath lost his Pearl*, the second of *Albumazar*, and the third of *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *The Atheist's Tragedy*, and *The Nobleman*, productions in which some very beautiful passages are to be found, and some entire scenes of great merit, we shall not probably be charged with the omission of any thing which could materially serve to heighten our idea of this unrivalled period of the *Romantic* drama. Beyond the limits, indeed, to which we are confined, one great name, that of

Shirley, meriting, in many respects, the celebrity which *now* accompanies the memory of Massinger and Fletcher, would require particular attention; but we must hasten to conclude this branch of the subject, by a simple enumeration, in alphabetical order, of those who, in any degree, contributed to fill the school of Shakspeare whilst its founder was in existence: —

Armin, Robert.	Machin, Lewis.
Barnes, Barnaby.	Massey, Charles.
Barry, Lodowick.	Mason, John.
Bird, William.	Munday, Anthony.
Borne, William.	Pett, ———
Boyle, William.	Porter, Henry.
Brandon, Samuel.	Rankins, William.
Brewer, Anthony.	Ridley, Samuel.
Campion, Thomas.	Robinson, ———
Carey, Elizabeth.	Rowley, Samuel.
Chettle, Henry.	Sharpman, Edward.
Cook, John.	Shawe, Robert.
Dauborn, Robert.	Singer, John.
Day, John.	Slaughter, Martin.
Downton, Thomas.	Smith, William.
Drayton, Michael.	Smith, Wentworth.
Field, Nathaniel.	Stephens, John.
Goff, Thomas.	Taylor, John.
Hathway, Richard.	Wadeson, Anthony.
Haughton, William.	Wilkins, George.
Hawkins, ———	Wilson, Robert.
Jubey, William.	Wilson, ———*

In this long list, the only name of celebrity is that of *Michael Drayton*, and it is a circumstance very extraordinary, and much to be regretted, that, although we find, from the manuscripts of Dulwich College, this great poet had written an entire play, under the title of *William Longsword*, and had contributed towards the composition of not less than twenty others, whilst we learn, at the same time, from Meres†, that he was well known as a writer of tragedy, not a particle

* This writer is mentioned by Meres in 1598, and praised for his skill in comedy.

† Vide Witt's Treasury, p. 281.

of his authenticated poetry, in this province, should have reached posterity.

After this concise view of the contemporaries of Shakspeare, whom we conceive to have in general adopted, either tacitly or avowedly, and with an approximation nearly proportioned to their talents, the style and structure of *his* drama, we have now to bring forward the mighty leader of another school, which, if not equally excellent with that established by Shakspeare, possesses the most undoubted originality, and, in its peculiar walk, a degree of merit which neither in its own day, nor in any subsequent period, has encountered any successful rivalry. To this description is it necessary to add the name of BEN JONSON?

Some attempts at a more classical construction of our drama had been made about the period when Jonson began to write: *Daniel*, for instance, had published his *Cleopatra*, in 1594, after the models of antiquity, and *Alexander* Earl of Stirling, printed, in 1603 and 1604, his *Monarchic Tragedies*, in which a regular chorus is introduced; but these were abortive efforts, unsupported by the requisite abilities for dramatic composition, and it remained for Jonson to impress upon his own age, and upon posterity, the conviction that an equally correct form of art might be combined with some of the striking excellences of the Romantic school.

It is probable that when Jonson first began to write for the theatre, which we find, from Mr. Henslowe's memorandums, was as early as 1593, and in conjunction with Decker, Marston, Chettle, &c., he conformed himself to their mode of composition; but no sooner had he ventured on the stage with a comedy exclusively his own, than he aspired to the establishment of a Dramatic Literature in this province, which, while it should adhere to the structure of the classical model, might exhibit various and extensive views of human nature, and uniformly have for its object the correction of vice and folly through the medium of unsparing satire.

Success, in a very extraordinary degree, accompanied this first adventure of laudable ambition, which under the title of *Every*

Man in his Humour made its appearance, at The Rose theatre, in 1596, and, with material alterations and improvements, at The Globe, in 1598. This was followed, at various periods, and almost to the very close of his life, by thirteen more pieces in the same department, of which ten are comedies, and the remaining three, as their author chose to designate them, comical satires.

That these productions, though in the line peculiarly adapted to his genius, should be equally excellent, it would be extravagant to expect. The best, and, we may add, the most incomparable in their kind, are the play just mentioned, *Volpone*, or *The Fox*, *Epicæne*, or *The Silent Woman*, and *The Alchemist*. As much inferior to these, but yet possessed of considerable merit, we may next enumerate *The Case is Altered*, *The Devil is an Ass*, and *The Staple of News*; and lastly, though not devoid of interesting and well written passages, *Bartholomew Fair*, *The New Inn*, *The Magnetic Lady*, and *A Tale of a Tub*. The comical satires, entitled *Every Man out of his Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels*, and *The Poetaster*, are, especially the last, composed in a tone of indignant strength; and, as their appellation might lead us to suppose, are personal and severe; but probably not more so than the occasion warranted.

The fair fame of Jonson which, both in a moral and dramatic light, has, for more than a century, been overwhelmed by a cloud of ignorance and prejudice, now brightens with more than pristine lustre, through the liberal and generous efforts of some accomplished scholars of the present day; and if ever it be permitted to departed spirits to witness the transactions of this sublunary sphere, with what delight and gratitude must the spirit of the injured bard look down upon the labours of his learned friends, upon the noble and disinterested protection of a *Gilchrist*, a *Godwin*, and a *Gifford*!

Under such circumstances, and with such a triumvirate in his support, it were needless, and, indeed, it were unjust, to do more than repeat in this place their own summary of his merit as a comic poet, to which we will now add, once for all, however unimportant it may be, the expression of our conviction of the general

justness of their sentiments with regard to his writings, and of the unanswerable nature of their defence with regard to his moral character; a tribute which we are, beyond measure, gratified in paying, as whilst they have impartially brought forward the great talents of Jonson, they have paid a full and frank acknowledgment to the superior comprehensiveness of the genius of Shakspeare; and have, at the same time, placed in a striking point of view the *steady friendship* which subsisted between these two luminaries of the dramatic world.

It is, however, only with the literary character of Jonson that we are now occupied; and on the topic immediately before us, the consideration of his *comic* powers, Mr. Godwin has cursorily, but very justly remarked, that "these, perhaps, compose his strongest claim to the admiration of all posterity. He excels every writer that ever existed, in the article of humour; and it is a sort of identical proposition to say, that humour is the soul of comedy. Even the caustic severity of his turn of mind aided him in this. He seized with the utmost precision the weaknesses of human character, and painted them with a truth that is altogether irresistible. Shakspeare has some characters of humour marvellously felicitous. But the difference between these two great supporters of the English drama, in the point of view we are considering, lies here. Humour is not Shakspeare's mansion, the palace wherein he dwells; there are many of his comedies, where the humorous characters rather form the episode of the piece; poetry, the manifestation of that lovely medium through which all creation appeared to his eye, and the quick sallies of repartee, are the objects with which his comic muse more usually delights herself. But Ben Jonson is all humour; and the fertility of his muse, in characters of this sort, is wholly inexhaustible." *

With a fuller elucidation of the subject, which laid more directly before him, Mr. Gifford, after commenting on the inutility of the

* Jonson's Works by Gifford, vol. i. pp. cccix. ecc.

common practice of contrasting the two poets, and after observing that "Shakspeare wants no light but his own; 'for' as he never has been equalled, and in all human probability never will be equalled, it seems an invidious employ, at best, to speculate minutely on the precise degree in which others fell short of him," proceeds to state, that "the judgment of Jonson was correct and severe, and his knowledge of human nature extensive and profound. He was familiar with the various combinations of the humours and affections, and with the nice and evanescent tints by which the extremes of opposing qualities melt into one another, and are lost to the vulgar eye: but the art which he possessed in perfection, was that of marking in the happiest manner the different shades of the same quality, in different minds, so as to discriminate the voluptuous from the voluptuous, the covetous from the covetous, &c.

"In what Hurd calls 'picturing,' he was excellent. His characters are delineated with a breadth and vigour, as well as a truth, that display a master hand; his figures stand prominent on the canvas, bold and muscular, though not elegant; his attitudes, though sometimes ungraceful, are always just; while his strict observation of proportion, (in which he was eminently skilled,) occasionally mellowed the hard and rigid tone of his colouring, and by the mere force of symmetry, gave a warmth to the whole, as pleasing as it was unexpected. Such, in a word, was his success, that it may be doubted whether he has been surpassed, or even equalled, by any of those who have attempted to tread in his steps.

"In the plots of his comedies, which were constructed from his own materials, he is deserving of undisputed praise. Without violence; without, indeed, any visible effort, the various events of the story are so linked together, that they have the appearance of accidental introduction; yet they all contribute to the main design, and support that just harmony which alone constitutes a perfect fable. Such, in fact, is the rigid accuracy of his plans, that it requires a constant, and almost painful attention, to trace out their various bearings and dependencies. Nothing is left to chance: before he sat

down to write, he had evidently arranged every circumstance in his mind ; preparations are made for incidents which do not immediately occur ; and hints are dropped, which can only be comprehended at the unravelling of the piece. The play does not end with Jonson, because the fifth act is come to a conclusion ; nor are the most important events precipitated, and the most violent revolutions of character suddenly effected, because the progress of the story has involved the poet in difficulties from which he cannot otherwise extricate himself. This praise, whatever be its worth, is enhanced by the rigid attention paid to the unities ; to say nothing of those of place and character, that of time is so well observed in most of his comedies, that the representation occupies scarcely an hour more on the stage, than the action would require in real life." *

Mr. Gifford then goes on to explain, why Jonson, "with such extraordinary requisites for the stage, joined to a strain of poetry always manly, frequently lofty, and sometimes sublime," should not have retained his popularity ; accounting for this result by the assignment of three causes, of which the first was, his dismissing "the grace and urbanity which mark his lighter pieces whenever he approached the stage, putting on the censor with the sock ;" the second sprung from the circumstance, that "Jonson was the painter of humours, not of passions," and aiming less to excite laughter in his hearers, "than to feast their understanding, and minister to their rational improvement," he frequently brought forward unamiable and uninteresting characters, pests which he wished to extirpate from society, not only by rendering them ridiculous, but by exhibiting them in an odious and disgusting light ; and the third was, "a want of just discrimination. He seems to have been deficient," observes Mr. Gifford, "in that true tact or feeling of propriety which Shakespeare possessed in full excellence. He appears to have had an equal value for all his characters, and he labours upon the most

* Gifford's Jonson, vol. i. Memoirs of Jonson, pp. ccxiii.—ccxv.

unimportant, and even disagreeable of them, with the same fond and paternal assiduity which accompanies his happiest efforts." * This laboured and indiscriminate finishing may be termed, indeed, one of the prominent characteristics of Jonson's composition ; and has, perhaps, more than any thing else, contributed to obscure his reputation.

The genius of Jonson seems to have forsaken him, when he touched the tragic chords. Neither pity nor terror answered to his call, and *Sejanus* and *Catiline* are valuable, principally, for their correct, though cold and hard, delineations of Roman character and costume. It is remarkable, that, in the construction of these tragedies, Jonson has deserted his Athenian masters, and, adopting the licence of the Romantic school, he has laid aside the unities of time and place ; but without acquiring that breadth and freedom in the execution of his subjects, with which such deviations ought to have been accompanied.

The devotion of the poet to this high department of his art was not confined, however, to these two Roman dramas ; he had planned a tragedy on the Fall of *Mortimer*, of which only a small fragment remains ; and we find, from the Dulwich Manuscripts, that, the year preceding the first performance of *Sejanus*, he had actually been engaged in writing a play on the subject of *Richard the Third*:—"Lent unto Benjemy Johstone," says Henslowe's memorandum, "at the appoyntment of E. Alleyn and Wm. Birde the 22 June 1602, in earnest of a boocke called *Richard Crook-back*, and for new adycions for Jeronymo, the some of xlb." † The *Richard* of Jonson, and the *Macbeth* of Milton !—would that time had spared the one and witnessed the execution of the other ! How delightful, how interesting might have been the labour of comparison !

If Jonson failed, as he must be allowed to have done, in communicating pathos and interest to his tragic productions, he has made us ample amends by the unrivalled excellence of his numerous *Masques*, a species of dramatic poetry, to which he, and he alone, put the seal of

* Gifford's Jonson, vol. i. Memoirs, pp. ccxvi.—ccxix.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 394.

perfection. Here his imagination, which, in the peculiar line of comedy he cultivated, had but little scope for expansion, and was, in his tragedies, altogether repressed, by an undeviating adhesion to the letter of history, expatiated as in its native element. "No sooner," remarks Mr. Gifford, "has he taken down his lyre, no sooner touched on his lighter pieces, than all is changed as if by magic, and he seems a new person. His genius awakes at once, his imagination becomes fertile, ardent, versatile, and excursive; his taste pure and elegant; and all his faculties attuned to sprightliness and pleasure."*

No greater honour, however, has been paid to the memory of Jonson, than the proof which Mr. Godwin has brought forward of his being the favourite author of Milton, "the predecessor that he chiefly had in his eye, and whom he seems principally to resemble in

* Gifford's Jonson, vol. i. Memoirs, p. ccxxx. After the passage which we have inserted in the text, follow these admirable observations:—

"Such were the Masques of Jonson, in which, as Mr. Malone says, 'the wretched taste of those times found amusement.' That James and his court delighted in them cannot be doubted, and we have only to open the Memoirs of Winwood and others to discover with what interest they were followed by the nobility of both sexes. Can we wonder at this? There were few entertainments of a public kind at which they could appear, and none in which they could participate. Here all was worthy of their hours of relaxation. Mythologues of classic purity, in which, as Hurd observes, the soundest moral lessons came recommended by the charm of numbers, were set forth with all the splendour of royalty, while Jones and Lanier, and Lawes and Ferrabosco, lavished all the grace and elegance of their respective arts on the embellishment of the entertainment.

"But in what was 'the taste of the times wretched?' In poetry, painting, architecture, they have not since been equalled; in theology, and moral philosophy, they are not even now surpassed; and it ill becomes us, who live in an age which can scarcely produce a Bartholomew Fair farce, to arraign the taste of a period which possessed a cluster of writers, of whom the meanest would now be esteemed a prodigy. And why is it assumed that the followers of the court of James were deficient in what Mr. Malone is pleased to call taste? To say nothing of the men, (who were trained to a high sense of decorum and intellectual discernment under Elizabeth,) the Veres, the Wroths, the Derbys, the Bedfords, the Rutlands, the Cliffords, and the Arundels, who danced in the fairy rings, in the gay and gallant circles of these enchanting devices, of which our most splendid shows are, at best, but beggarly parodies, were fully as accomplished in every internal and external grace as those who, in our days, have succeeded to their names and honours."—Memoirs, pp. ccxxx. ccxxx.

his style of composition.”* Among the numerous passages by which he has substantiated this fact, none are more conspicuous than those that breathe the spirit of the lyrical portion of the *Masques*; for “Milton,” as he observes, “will certainly be found to have studied his compositions in this kind more assiduously, than those of any of his contemporaries. — It would be strange indeed, if the poet, who in early youth composed the *Mask of Comus*, had not diligently studied the writings of Ben Jonson.”† Can there be a test of merit more indisputable than this? for *Comus*, though by no means faultless as a *Masque*, has to boast of a poetry more rich and imaginative than is to be found in any other composition, save *The Tempest* of Shakspeare.

“It is not however,” proceeds Mr. Godwin, “in lighter and incidental matters only, that Milton studied the great model afforded him by Jonson: we may find in him much that would almost tempt us to hold opinion with Pythagoras, and to believe that the very spirit and souls of some men became transfused into their poetical successors. The address of our earlier poet to the two universities, prefixed to his most consummate performance, the comedy of *The Fox*, will strike every reader familiar with the happiest passages of Milton’s prose, with its wonderful resemblance. — They were both of them emphatically poets who had sounded the depths, and formed themselves in the school, of classic lore.

“The difference between ‘them’ may perhaps best be illustrated from the topic of religion. They had neither of them one spark of libertine and latitudinarian unbelief. But Jonson was not, like Milton, penetrated with his religion. It is to him a sort of servitude — it is not the principle that actuates, but the check that controls him. But in Milton, it is the element in which he breathes, a part of his nature. He acts, ‘as ever in his Great Task-master’s eye:’ and this is not his misfortune; but he rejoices in his condition, that he has

* Gifford’s *Jonson*, vol. i. p. ccxcvii.

† *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. cccliii.—cccv.

so great, so wise, and so sublime a Being, to whom to render his audit." *

The labours of Jonson closed with a species of dramatic poetry in which he had made no previous attempt, and we have only to regret that it was left in an unfinished state ; for had the *Sad Shepherd* been completed in the style of excellence in which it was commenced, it would have been superior not only to the *Faithful Shepherdess* of Fletcher, but perhaps to any thing which he himself had written.

When Jonson, in his noble and generous eulogium on Shakspeare, tells us, that

“ He was not of an age, but for all time,”

he seized a characteristic of which the reverse, in some degree, applies to himself ; for had he paid less attention to the *minutiæ* of his own age, and dedicated himself more to universal habits and feelings, his popularity would have nearly equalled that of the poet whom he loved and praised. Yet his fame rests on a broad and durable foundation, and we point, with pride and triumph, to that matchless constellation of dramatic merit, where burn, with inextinguishable glory, the mighty, names of SHAKSPEARE, JONSON, FLETCHER, MASSINGER.

* Gifford's Jonson, vol. i. p. cccvii.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF SHAKSPEARE CONTINUED TO THE CLOSE OF HIS RESIDENCE IN LONDON.

VARIOUS particulars relative to the personal history of Shakspeare, in addition to those which terminated his biography in the country, having been detailed in the chapters that record his commencement as an actor*, the composition of his poems†, and his first efforts as a dramatic writer‡, we have now to collect the few circumstances of his life which time has spared to us, during the most active season of its duration, resuming our narrative at a period when the capital was under considerable alarm from the prevalence of the plague, and from the numerous conspiracies which were entered into against the life of the Queen. Shakspeare had been exposed, during the year of his birth, to great risk from the plague at Stratford, and its recurrence in 1593 seems to have made so deep an impression upon him, that he has alluded to it in more than one of his plays; particularly in his *Romeo and Juliet* written in this very year, where he mentions the practice of sealing up the doors of houses, in which “the infectious pestilence did reign.” § It is probable that the effect on his mind might have been rendered more powerful, by the recollected narrative of those who had tended his infancy, and who, no doubt, had often told him of the danger which threatened the dawn of his existence.

We have found that, on his arrival in London, his first employment was that of an actor, a profession which, we certainly know, he continued to exercise for, at least, seventeen years. That he was by

* Vide Part II. Chap. 1.

† Part II. Chaps. 2. & 5.

‡ Part II. Chap. 9.

§ Act v. sc. 2. Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xx. p. 236. See also *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, act ii. sc. 1.

no means partial, however, to this occupation, nay that he bitterly regretted the necessity which compelled him to have recourse to it, as a mode of procuring subsistence, may be fairly deduced from the language of his ninety-first sonnet : —

“ O for my sake do you with fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide,
Than publick means, which publick manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdu'd
To what it works in.”

It appears strongly indeed, from the best of all evidence, that of his own words, that his early progress in life was thwarted by many obstacles, and accompanied by severe struggles, by poverty, contumely, and neglect. This he has emphatically told us, not only in one, but in several places, and in terms so expressive as to make us sympathize acutely with his sorrows. Yet we perceive him bearing up under his difficulties with a noble and independent spirit, and contrasting the world's oppression with the solace of private friendship. Thus, in that beautiful sonnet, the twenty-ninth, which has been noticed in another place, the transition from despair to hope is finely painted : —

“ When *in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,*
I all alone beweepe my out-cast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featur'd like him, like him with friends possess'd,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope. —
Yet in these thoughts *myself almost despising,*
Haply I think on thee, — and then my state
(Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate :”

and again, in sonnet the thirty-seventh, —

“ As a decrepit father takes delight
To see his active child do deeds of youth,

So, I *made lame by fortune's dearest spite*
 Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth ; —
So then I am not lame, poor, nor despis'd,
 Whilst that this shadow doth such substance give,
 That I in thy abundance am suffic'd,
 And by a part of all thy glory live."

That, by the salutary though severe lessons of adversity, he had learnt to conquer his misfortunes, and to despise the shafts of vulgar scandal, will be evident from the two subsequent passages : —

" Then hate me when thou wilt ; if ever, now ;
 Now *while the world is bent my deeds to cross,*
 Join with the *spite of fortune,* make me bow,
 And do not drop in for an after-loss :
 Ah ! do not, when my heart hath scap'd this sorrow,
 Come in the rearward of a *conquer'd woe.*" Sonnet 90.

" Your love and pity doth the impression fill
 Which *vulgar scandal stamp'd upon my brow ;*
 For what care I who calls me well or ill,
 So you o'er-green my bad, my good allow ? —
 In so profound abysm I throw all care
 Of other's voices, that *my adders sense*
To critick and to flatterer stopp'd are." Sonnet 112.

These complaints and consolations were, no doubt, written during the first *ten* years of his residence in London, while his reputation, as a poet, was yet assailable, and while the patronage of Lord Southampton was his only shield against the jealousy and traduction of illiberal competitors, whether off or on the stage. But the fame arising from his poems, and from the dramas of *Romeo and Juliet*, and *King Richard the Third*, had, in 1596, most assuredly secured him from any apprehensions of permanent injury ; more especially as, soon after this period, the encouragement and support of *William, Earl of Pembroke*, and *Philip, Earl of Montgomery*, who, as the players tell us, in their dedication of the first folio, *had prosecuted our poet's plays, and their author living, with so much favour* *, were added to the protecting influence of Southampton.

* Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 164.; and Chalmers's Apology, p. 599.

It was in this year, namely 1596, that Shakspeare's feelings as a father were put to a severe trial, by the loss of his only son Hamnet, who died in the month of August, at the age of twelve—a deprivation which, however sustained with fortitude, must have been long deplored.

He was now residing, it would appear from evidence referred to by Mr. Malone *, near the Bear-Garden in Southwark, and in the following year (1597) purchased of William Underhill Esquire, one of the best houses in his native town of Stratford, which, having repaired and improved, he denominated New Place. † Whether this

* See his "Inquiry," p. 215.

† Of this mansion, which Dugdale informs us was originally built by Sir Hugh Clopton in the time of Henry the Seventh, and was then "a fair-house, built of brick and timber," and continued in the Clopton family until 1563, when it was purchased by William Bott, and resold in 1570 to William Underhill, Esq., Mr. Wheler has given us the following account, subsequent to the decease of our poet: — "On Shakspeare's death, it came to his daughter Mrs. Hall, for her life; and then to her only child Elizabeth, afterwards Lady Barnard; after whose death New Place was sold, in 1675, to Sir Edward Walker, Knt. Garter, King at Arms, who died the 20th of February, 1676-7; and under his Will, dated the 29th of June, 1676, it came to his only child, Barbara, the wife of Sir John Clopton, Knt. of Clopton, in this parish. Their younger son, Sir Hugh Clopton, Knt. a barrister at law, and one of the heralds at arms, afterwards became possessed of New Place, which he modernised by internal and external alterations; and in 1742, entertained Macklin, Garrick, and Dr. Delany, under Shakspeare's mulberry tree. By Sir Hugh's son-in-law and executor, Henry Talbot, Esq. brother to the Lord Chancellor Talbot, it was sold to the Rev. Francis Gastrell, vicar of Frodsham in Cheshire; who, if we may judge by his actions, felt no sort of pride or pleasure in this charming retirement, no consciousness of his being possessed of the sacred ground which the muses had consecrated to the memory of their favourite poet. The celebrated mulberry-tree planted by Shakspeare's hand became first an object of his dislike, because it subjected him to answer the frequent importunities of travellers, whose zeal might prompt them to visit it, and to hope that they might meet inspiration under its shade. In an evil hour, the sacrilegious priest ordered the tree, then remarkably large, and at its full growth, to be cut down; which was no sooner done, than it was cleft to pieces for fire-wood: this took place in 1756, to the great regret and vexation, not only of the inhabitants, but of every admirer of our bard. The greater part of it was, however, soon after purchased by Mr. Thomas Sharp, watch-maker, of Stratford; who, well acquainted with the value set upon it by the world, turned it much to his advantage, by converting every fragment into small boxes, goblets, tooth-pick cases, tobacco-stoppers, and numerous other articles. Nor did New Place long escape the destructive hand of Mr. Gastrell; who, being compelled to pay the

was the purchase in which he is said to have been so materially assisted by Lord Southampton, cannot positively be affirmed; but as he had not long emerged from his difficulties, it is highly probable that on this, as well as on subsequent occasions, he was indebted to the bounty of his patron.*

To the year 1598 has been commonly assigned the commencement of the intimacy between our author and Ben Jonson. This epoch rests upon the authority of Mr. Rowe, who informs us, that "Shakspeare's acquaintance with Ben Jonson began with a remarkable piece of humanity and good-nature. Mr. Jonson, who was at that time *altogether unknown to the world*, had offered one of his plays to the players to have it acted; and the persons into whose hands it was put, after having turned it carelessly and superciliously over, was just upon the point of returning it to him with an ill-natured answer, that it would be of no service to their company, when Shakspeare luckily cast his eye upon it, and found something so well in it, as to engage

monthly assessments towards the maintenance of the poor, (some of which he expected to avoid, because he resided part of the year at Lichfield, though his servants continued in the house at Stratford during his absence,) in the heat of his anger declared, *that* house should never be assessed again; and to give his imprecation due effect, and wishing, as it seems, to be "damned to everlasting fame," the demolition of New Place soon followed; for, in 1759, he rased the building to the ground, disposed of the materials, and left Stratford amidst the rage and curses of its inhabitants. Thus was the town deprived of one of its principal ornaments, and most valued relics, by a man, who, had he been possessed of a true sense, and a veneration for the memory of our bard, would have rather preserved whatever particularly concerned their great and immortal owner, than ignorantly have trodden the ground which had been cultivated by the greatest genius in the world, without feeling those emotions which naturally arise in the breast of the generous enthusiast.

"The site of New Place was afterwards added to the adjoining garden, by its illiberal proprietor; under whose Will, made on the 2d of October, 1768, it came to his widow, Mrs. Jane Gastrell; who, in 1775, sold it to William Hunt, Esq. late of this town; from whose family it was purchased by Messrs. Battersbee and Morris, bankers, of Stratford." — Wheler's History of Stratford, p. 135.; and Guide to Stratford, pp. 45. 47.

* It is more probable that he was assisted on various occasions by His Lordship, than that the large sum, mentioned by tradition, was bestowed at once, and at a period, too, when it was less required.

him first to read it through, and afterwards to recommend Mr. Jonson and his writings to the public. *

That this kind office was in perfect unison with the general character of Shakspeare, will readily be admitted, yet there is much reason to believe that the whole account is without foundation; for, as we have related, in the last chapter, *Every Man in his Humour*, which is supposed by all the editors and commentators to be the play alluded to by Rowe, was first performed at the Rose theatre; and "that Jonson was 'altogether unknown to the world,'" remarks Mr. Gifford, "is a palpable untruth. At this period," (1598) he continues, "Jonson was as well known as Shakspeare, and perhaps better. He was poor indeed, and very poor, and a mere retainer of the theatres; but he was intimately acquainted with Henslowe and Alleyn, and with all the performers at their houses. He was familiar with Drayton and Chapman, and Rowley, and Middleton, and Fletcher; he had been writing for three years, in conjunction with Marston, and Decker, and Chettle, and Porter, and Bird, and with most of the poets of the day: he was celebrated by Meres as one of the principal writers of tragedy; and he had long been rising in reputation as a scholar and a poet among the most distinguished characters of the age. At this moment he was employed on *Every Man out of his Humour*, which was acted in 1599, and, in the elegant dedication of that comedy to the 'Gentlemen of the Inns of Court,' he says, 'When I wrote this poem, I had *friendship with divers* in your Societies, who, as they were *great names* in learning, so were they no less examples of living. Of them and *then*, that I say no more, it was not despised.' — And yet, Jonson was, at this time, 'altogether unknown to the world!' and offered a virgin comedy (which had already been three years on the stage) to a player in the humble hope that it might be accepted." †

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. pp. 67, 68.

† Gifford's Jonson, vol. i. Memoirs, pp. xliii. xlv. — Shakspeare, whose name stands at the head of the principal performers in *Every Man in his Humour*, is supposed to have acted the part of Knowell.

The presumption is, that our poet and Jonson were acquainted anterior to 1598, probably as early as 1595, and that the dramatic reputation of Ben was the chief motive which induced the company at the Black Friars to procure the alterations in, and to secure the property of, *Every Man in his Humour*. Such even is the opinion of Mr. Malone himself, when he has once forgotten the preposterous charge of *ingratitude*, on the part of Jonson, for this *imaginary introduction* to the stage by Shakspeare; for in a note, on an entry of Mr. Henslowe's, which runs thus:—"11 of Maye 1597, at the comedy of umers (humours) 11," that is, acted eleven times since November, 1596, he observes,—“Perhaps Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*.” It will appear hereafter, that he had money dealings with Mr. Henslowe, the manager of this theatre, and that he wrote for him. The play might have been *afterwards purchased from this company by the Lord Chamberlain's Servants* (that is, by Shakspeare, Burbage, Heminge, &c.) by whom it was acted in 1598*; an inconsistency which has been keenly and justly animadverted upon by Mr. Gifford. †

Two domestic circumstances mark the next year of our author's life; for in 1599, his father obtained from the Herald's Office a confirmation of his Coat of Arms, and his sister Joan married Mr. William Hart, a hatter in Stratford, occurrences which, in the great dearth of events unfortunately incident to our subject, are of some importance.

If an inference, however, made by Sir John Sinclair, could be considered as legitimately drawn, this year might be esteemed one of the most important in the poet's life; for, in the twentieth volume of his Statistical Account of Scotland, when speaking of the local traditions respecting Macbeth's castle at Dunsinnan, he infers, from their coincidence with the drama, that Shakspeare, “in his capacity of actor, travelled to Scotland in 1599, and collected on the spot mate-

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 365.

† Gifford's Jonson, vol. i. p. cclxxix.

rials for the exercise of his imagination." "Every attempt," remarks Mr. Stoddart, who has introduced this anecdote into his interesting Tour, "to illustrate the slightest circumstance, concerning such a mind, deserves our gratitude ; but in this instance, conjecture seems to have gone its full length, if not to have overstepped the modesty of nature. The probability of Shakspeare's ever having been in Scotland, is very remote. It should seem, by his uniformly accenting the name of this spot Dunsinane, that he could not possibly have taken it from the mouths of the country-people, who as uniformly accent it Dunsinnan. Every one knows, with what ease local tradition is so modified, as to suit public history ; and it is probable, that what Sir John heard in 1772, was a superstructure raised upon the drama itself. Amid the blaze of Shakspeare's genius, small praise is lost ; but it is, perhaps, more honourable to his intellectual energies to suppose, that so much minute information was collected from books, or from conversation, than from an actual acquaintance with the place." *

Though we by no means contend for the validity of the inference, yet we must observe, that one of the principal objections of Mr. Stoddart is unfounded ; for Shakspeare certainly was familiar with both modes of pronunciation, and has given us a specimen of the popular accent in the following well-known passage : —

" Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be, until
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him."

Neither do we think, that his genius would have suffered any deterioration, nor his drama any loss of interest, had he actually painted from local observation. †

* Remarks on Local Scenery and Manners in Scotland, 8vo. vol. ii. pp. 197, 198.

† It is a remarkable circumstance, however, that James is said, during this very year (1599), to have solicited Queen Elizabeth to send a company of English comedians to Edinburgh.—Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 51.

If we be correct in attributing *Much Ado about Nothing* to the year 1599, it is here that some notice should be taken of an anecdote recorded by Aubrey, who, meaning to allude to the character of Dogberry in this play, though by mistake he refers to the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, says, that "the humour of the constable he (Shakspeare) happened to take at Grendon, in Bucks, which is the roade from London to Stratford, and there was living that constable about 1642, when I first came to Oxon. Mr. Jos. Howe is of that parish, and knew him. Ben Jonson and he did gather humours of men daily, wherever they came." *

That Shakspeare was accustomed to visit Stratford annually, has been already noticed †; and we learn from Antony Wood, that in performing these journeys, he used to bait at the Crown-Inn, in Oxford, which was then kept by John Davenant, the father of the poet. Antony represents Mrs. Davenant as both beautiful and accomplished, and her husband as a lover of plays, and a great admirer of Shakspeare. ‡ The frequent visits of the bard, and the charms of his landlady, appear to have given birth to some scandalous surmises; for Oldys, repeating Wood's story, adds, on the authority of Betterton and Pope, that "their son, young Will. Davenant, (afterwards Sir William,) was then a little school-boy in the town, of about seven or eight years old, and so fond also of Shakspeare, that whenever he heard of his arrival, he would fly from school to see him. One day, an old townsman observing the boy running homeward almost out of breath, asked him whither he was posting in that heat and hurry. He answered, to see his *god-father* Shakspeare. There's a good boy, said the other, but have a care that you don't take *God's* name in vain." § It has also been said, that Sir William had the weakness to feel gratified by the publicity of the supposition. ||

* Bodleian Letters, vol. iii. p. 307.

† Vide Part II. Chapter 1.

‡ Athenæ Oxon. vol. ii. p. 292. edit. 1692.

§ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 124.

|| Ibid. vol. iii. p. 209.

It is very probable that, in 1600, Shakspeare might so time his annual visit to Stratford, as to be present at the christening of his nephew, William Hart, his sister's eldest son ; who, according to the Register, was baptized on the 28th of the August of this year, and who, together with his two brothers, Thomas and Michael, is remembered in the poet's will, by a legacy of five pounds.

The subsequent year exhibits our bard in great favour at court. The Queen had been delighted with the *Two Parts of Henry the Fourth*, and honoured their author with a command to bring forward Falstaff in another play. Tradition says, this was executed in a fortnight, and afforded Her Majesty the most entire satisfaction. The approbation and encouragement, indeed, of the two sovereigns under whose reigns he flourished, was a subject of contemporary notoriety ; for Jonson, in his celebrated eulogy, thus apostrophises his departed friend : —

“ Sweet swan of Avon, what a sight it were,
To see thee in our waters yet appear :
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take *Eliza*, and our *James*.”

That Elizabeth “ gave him many gracious marks of her favour,” has been mentioned by Rowe as a matter of no doubt ; and he elsewhere observes, that “ what grace soever the Queen conferred upon him, it was not to *her* only he owed the *fortune* which the reputation of his wit made * ;” an observation which ushers in the acknowledgment of Southampton's well-known generosity.

The pleasure arising from this tide of success must have been, in no slight degree, damped by the sorrow which a son so truly great and good, must have felt on the loss of his father. This worthy man, of whom, in the opening of our work, some account will be found, expired on the 8th of September, 1601, leaving a name immortalised by the celebrity of his offspring.

* Vide Rowe's Life of Shakspeare, in Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. pp. 65, 66.

In 1602, no other trace of our author is discoverable, independent of his literary exertions, than that, on the 1st day of May, he purchased, in the town and parish of Stratford, one hundred and seven acres of land, for the sum of 320*l.*, which lands appear to have been indissolubly connected with his former purchase of New Place, and to have descended with it, until the extinction of the latter by Mr. Gastrell. *

The year following, however, brought an accession of dignity and power; for no sooner had James gotten possession of the English throne, than he granted a Licence to the Company at the Globe, which bears date the 19th of May, 1603, and being entitled "*Pro Laurentio Fletcher et Willielmo Shakespeare et aliis*," gives us reason to conclude, that the persons thus distinguished were, if not joint managers, at least leaders in the concern. †

It was about this period also that Shakspeare may, upon good grounds, be supposed to have taken his farewell of the stage *as an actor*; relinquishing this profession of which he appears not to have been very fond, for the purpose of more closely superintending the general concerns of the theatre, of which his writings continued to be the chief support. One strong motive for this deduction has arisen from the circumstance, that his name, as a performer, is nowhere visible beyond the era of Jonson's *Sejanus*, in which play, first acted in 1603, it is found in the list of the principal comedians, while in *The Fox*, published only two years afterwards, performed at the same theatre, and by the same company, he is not mentioned, though the list of players is, as usual, inserted. That the term *fellow*, which continued to be mutually used by Shakspeare and the comedians of the Globe, cannot indicate a contrary conclusion, is evident from the language of the poet himself, who, in his will, though written three years after all connection, on his part, with the theatre had been given up, still speaks of Hemynge, Burbage, and Condell as *his fellows*.

* Wheler's Guide to Stratford upon Avon, p. 18.

† See this Licence given at length in our History of the Stage, Part II. Chapter 7.

To nearly the same epoch we may attribute the *friendly* association of Shakspeare and Jonson in the celebrated club at the Mermaid, a form of society to which, from its ease and independency, Englishmen have always been peculiarly partial. The institution in question originated with Sir Walter Raleigh, and, as Mr. Gifford has well observed, speaking of Jonson's resort to it about the year 1603, "combined more talent and genius, perhaps, than ever met together before or since;—here," he adds, "for many years, he (Jonson) regularly repaired with Shakspeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, Selden, Cotton, Carew, Martin, Donne, and many others, whose names, even at this distant period, call up a mingled feeling of reverence and respect. Here, in the full flow and confidence of friendship, the lively and interesting 'wit-combats' took place between Shakspeare and our author; and hither, in probable allusion to them, Beaumont fondly lets his thoughts wander, in his letter to Jonson, from the country:—

"What things have we seen,
Done at the MERMAID! heard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whom they came,
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest, &c." *

For the expression "wit-combats," in this interesting passage, we must refer to Fuller, who, describing the character of the bard of Avon, says: "Many were the wit-combates between Shakspeare and Ben Jonson. I behold them like a Spanish great galleon, and an English man of war. Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid but slow in his performances, Shakspeare, like the latter, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention." †

With what delight should we have hung over any well authenticated instances of these "wit-combats!" but, unfortunately, nothing,

* Gifford's Jonson, vol. i. Memoirs, pp. lxv. lxvi.

† Worthies, folio edition, part iii. p. 126.

upon which we can depend, has descended to us. How much is it to be regretted that Fuller, who, no doubt, from the manner in which he has mentioned the subject, had many of these lively sallies fresh in his recollection, has not been more communicative! What tradition, however, or rather, perhaps, what fabrication, has left us, of this kind, will be found in the notes. *

* Were the repartees, however, of which time has deprived us, no better than those that we have now to communicate, it must be confessed, that the two bards have no great reason to complain of the loss. "Shakspeare," relates Capell, "was god-father to one of Ben Jonson's children, and after the christening, being in deep study, Jonson came to cheer him up; and asked him why he was so melancholy? No faith, Ben, says he, not I; but I have been considering a great while what should be the fittest gift for me to bestow upon my god-child, and I have resolved at last. I prithee what, says he? I'faith, Ben, I'll e'en give her a dozen good Latin (latten) spoons, and thou shalt *translate* them." — Notes on Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 94.

The second of these *morceaux* is, if possible, still worse than the preceding: "Mr. Ben Jonson and Mr. William Shakspeare being merrie at a tavern, Mr. Jonson begins this for his epitaph,

" Here lies Ben Jonson
Who was once one —

he gives it to Mr. Shakspeare to make up, who presently writte,

" That, while he liv'd was a *slow* thing,
And now, being dead, is *no*-thing."

" This stuff," adds Mr. Gifford, "is copied from the Ashmole MS. 38." — Gifford's Ben Jonson, vol. i. Memoirs, p. lxxx. note.

The next may be said to be rather of a "better leer."

" Verses by Ben Jonson and Shakspeare, occasioned by the motto to the Globe Theatre — *Totus mundus agit histrionem*.

JONSON.

" If, but *stage actors*, all the world displays,
Where shall we find *spectators* of their plays?"

SHAKSPEARE.

" Little, or much, of what we see, we do;
We are all both *actors* and *spectators* too."

" Poetical Characteristicks, 8vo. MS. vol. i., some time in the Harleian Library; which volume was returned to its owner." — Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 130.

" That Shakspeare and Ben Jonson were intimate," observes Dr. Berkenhout, "appears from the following letter, written by G. Peel, a dramatic poet, to his friend Marle: —

It would appear that Shakspeare was now rapidly accumulating property; he had purchased, we have seen, New Place in 1597, a hundred and seven acres of land in 1602, and in 1605 he became the purchaser of the lease of the moiety of the great and small tithes of Stratford, for the sum of 440l. *, a pretty strong proof of the success which had accompanied the exercise of his talents, both as an *actor* and a poet, and a complete one of his having overcome the difficulties which, for some years after his arrival in London, had so oppressively encumbered his efforts.

We may add, that he was gratified this year by the affectionate remembrance of his former associate Augustine Phillips, who, in his Will, proved on the 13th of May, 1605, gives and bequeaths to his "Fellowe Willm Shakespeare a thirty shillings piece in gould." †

It was the fashion at this period among the poets, to compliment a monarch, who was peculiarly open to flattery, especially on the subject of his genealogy, and on the union of the three kingdoms in his own person; a species of panegyric in which our author had been preceded by Daniel, Drayton, and Ben Jonson, and even by such

* Friend Marle,

' I never longed for thy company more than last night, we were all very merrye at the Globe, when Ned Alleyn did not scruple to affyrme pleasantely to thy friend Will, that he had stolen his speeche about the qualities of an actor's excellencye, in Hamlet hys tragedye, from conversations manyfold whych had passed between them, and opinyons given by Alleyn touchinge the subject. Shakespeare did not take this talke in good sorte; but Jonson put an end to the strife, wittylie remarking, This affaيرة needeth no contentione; you stole it from Ned, no doubt; do not marvel: have you not seen him act tymes out of number? G. PEEL.'

"Whence I copied this letter, I do not recollect; but I remember that at the time of transcribing it, I had no doubt of its authenticity."—*Biographia Literaria*, pp. 399, 400. 4to. 1777.

I believe the first appearance of this letter was in the *Annual Register* for 1770, whence it was copied into the *Biographia Britannica*, and in both these works it commences in the following manner: "I must desyre that my syster hyr watche, and the cookerie book you promysed, may be sente bye the man. — I never longed, &c." Of the four, this is the only anecdote worth preserving; but I apprehend it to be a mere forgery.

* Wheler's Guide to Stratford, p. 18.

† See his Will, in Chalmers's Apology, p. 433.

grave characters as Dugdale and Wake.* It was natural, therefore, for Shakspeare, who had been under some obligation to James, to express his sense of it in a similar way, and he has accordingly, through the medium of his *Macbeth*, which we conceive to have been performed in 1606, represented James as descended from Banquo, a character which, for this purpose, he has drawn, contrary to his historical authorities, noble and blameless. James, as Dr. Farmer† thinks, was so delighted with the line which painted him as carrying “two-fold balls and treble sceptres,” that it was on this occasion he was induced to acknowledge the compliment by a letter to the bard from his own hand; an anecdote which seems entitled to full credit, as it originated, Oldys tells us, with Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, who had it immediately from Sir William D’Avenant, in whose hands the letter long remained. ‡

This year has been also rendered memorable in the biography of our poet by the publication of a drama called “The Return from Parnassus,” which had been acted by the students of St. John’s College, Cambridge, as early as 1602. To a passage in this very curious production is to be ascribed all the idle tales which have been circulated with so much industry and avidity relative to a supposed quarrel between our author and Ben Jonson, in doing which, though the principal object has been to substantiate a charge of envy and malignancy against the latter, the mode in which the attempt is executed has been such as would, were the premises true, reflect no credit on the former. But the whole is a tissue of the most groundless and indefensible scandal, and we stand aghast at the motives which could induce such persevering hostility against the very man who, more than all others, had been the steady and professed eulogist of the poet whom these commentators sally forth to protect.

* Wake, in his “*Rex Platonicus, sive de potentiis, principis Jacobi regis ad Acad. Oxon. adventu, anno 1605*,” speaking of the prophecy of the Weird Sisters, says, *Vaticinii veritatem rerum eventus comprobavit; Banquonis enim e stirpe potentissimus Jacobus oriundus.*

† Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. x. p. 300.

‡ Ibid. vol. i. p. 130.

The passage, however, as equally applicable and important to both these great men, it will be necessary to transcribe. Burbage and Kempe, Shakspeare's fellow-comedians, are introduced conversing about the histrionic powers of the students of Cambridge, the latter ridiculing and the former defending their attempts, by observing, "that a little teaching will mend their faults; and it may be, besides, they will be able to pen a part;" to which Kempe, who seems here an object of irony, replies, —

"Few of the university pen plays well; they smell too much of that writer Ovid, and that writer *Metamorphosis*, and talk too much of Proserpina and Juppiter. Why here's our fellow Shakspeare put them (the University poets) all down, ay, and Ben Jonson too. O that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow; he brought up Horace, giving the poets a pill, but our fellow Shakspeare has given him a purge that made him bewray his credit." *

"When an object is placed too near to the eye," observes Mr. Gilchrist, commenting on this quotation, "the vision is strained and impaired, and the object obscured or distorted: if the commentators had viewed this passage 'as others use,' they would have found in the numerous dramas published anterior to the above passage, the instruments by which he put Ben down; and, in their various excellence, the means by which he threw the claims of his competitor into the shade. The passage has no reference to *personal* animosity; it was a just testimony to the superior merit of 'the poet of nature,' over the writings of more 'learned candidates for fame;' and the well-merited compliment is very appropriately put into the mouth of Will Kempe, one of Shakspeare's *fellows*." †

It is remarkable, that with the exception of Rowe, who, however, soon retracted the accusation, none of the editors of, and commentators on, Shakspeare had, previous to Steevens, attempted to prove Jonson the libeller of his friend. It remained therefore for his com-

* Ancient British Drama, vol. i. p. 64. Act iv. sc. 3.

† Gilchrist's Examination, pp. 15, 16.

mentators of the last half century to undertake the noble task of heaping a thousand groundless calumnies on the defenceless head of Shakspeare's dearest friend, on him whom he most admired, and by whom he was best beloved! The iteration of these charges, under every form and shape, and connected with a commentary rendered popular by the text to which it was appended, had totally poisoned the public mind, when Mr. Gilchrist, and, still more amply, Mr. Gifford, by hunting these gentlemen through all their windings and doublings, through all the channels to which they had recourse for defamation, have produced a refutation of their charges, and a detection of their practices, more complete, perhaps, than any other instance of the kind on literary record. *

* One of these refutations, as including a complete detection of the fallacious grounds on which a well-known anecdote relative to Shakspeare and Jonson has been founded, it will be useful as well as entertaining to transcribe.

"Hales of Eaton," observes Mr. Gifford, "was reported to have said (though the matter was not much in Hales of Eaton's way), 'that there was no subject of which any person ever writ, but he would produce it much better done by Shakspeare,' p. 16. — Shakspeare, vol. i. edit. 1593. This is told by Dryden, 1667. The next version is by Tate, 1680. 'Our learned Hales was wont to assert, that since the time of Orpheus no common place has been touched upon, where Shakspeare has not performed as well.' Next comes the illustrious Gildon (of Dunciad memory), and he models the story thus, from Dryden, as he says, with a salvo for the accuracy of his recollection! 'Mr. Hales of Eaton affirmed, that he would shew all the poets of antiquity outdone by Shakspeare.—The *enemies* of Shakspeare would by no means yield to this; so that it came to a trial of skill. The place agreed on for the dispute was Mr. Hales's chamber at Eton. A great many *books were sent down* by the enemies of this poet, and on the appointed day my lord Falkland, sir John Suckling, and *all the persons of quality* that had wit and learning, met there, and upon a thorough disquisition of the point, the judges chosen out of this assembly unanimously gave the preference to Shakspeare, and the Greek and Roman poets were adjudged to vail at least their glory in that to the English poet.' P. 17.

"The story now reached Rowe; and as it was discovered about this time, that the praise of Shakspeare was worth nothing unless coupled with the abuse of Jonson, it puts on this form. 'Mr. Hales, who had sate still some time, hearing Ben reproach Shakspeare with the want of learning, and ignorance of the antients, told him, at last,' &c. Thus it stood in the first edition: but Mr. Rowe was an honest man, and having found occasion to change his mind before the appearance of the second edition, he struck the passage out, and inserted in its stead, — 'sir John Suckling, who was a professed admirer of Shakspeare, had undertaken, with some warmth, his defence against Ben Jonson, when Mr. Hales,' &c. &c. —

Truly delightful must it be to every lover of Shakspeare and of human nature, to find that the affectionate confidence of our bard was not thrown away, was not placed on a man worthless and insensible of the gift, but was returned by honest Ben, however occasionally rough in his manner and temper, with an attachment amounting to enthusiasm, with a steadiness which neither years nor infirmities could shake. *

On the last day of the year 1607, our poet buried at the church of St. Saviour's, Southwark, his brother Edmond, who, with singular precision, is entered in the register of that parish as "Edmond Shakspeare, a *player*," so that, as Mr. Chalmers has observed, "there were two Shakspeares on the stage during the same period." †

He had likewise married, on the fifth of June of this year, his favourite daughter Susanna, to Dr. John Hall, a physician of considerable skill and reputation in his profession, which he exercised at Stratford, residing during his father-in-law's life-time in the old

"Thus we have the Fable of the *Three Black Crows*! and thus a simple observation of Mr. Hales (which in all probability he never made), is dramatised, at length, into a scene of obloquy against our author! A tissue of mere dotage scarcely deserves unravelling; but it may be just observed, that when Jonson was seized with his last illness, (after which he certainly never went 'to Mr. Hales's chamber, at Eton,' or elsewhere), the two grave judges, Suckling and Falkland, who sat on the merits of all the Greek and Roman poets, and decided with such convincing effect, were, the first in the twelfth, and the second in the fifteenth year of their ages! — But the chief mistake lies with Dryden, whose memory was always subservient to the passion of the day; the words which he has put into the mouth of Mr. Hales being, in fact, the property of Jonson. Long before Suckling and Falkland were out of leading-strings, he had told the world, that Shakspeare surpassed not only all his contemporary poets, but even those of Greece and Rome: — and if Mr. Hales used these words, without giving the credit of them to Jonson, he was, to say the least of it, a bold plagiarist."—Vol. i. p. cclxii.

* "It is my fixed persuasion," says Mr. Gifford, (not lightly adopted, but deduced from a wide examination of the subject,) that they (Jonson and Shakspeare) were friends and associates till the latter finally retired — that no feud, no jealousy ever disturbed their connection — that Shakspeare was pleased with Jonson, and that Jonson loved and admired Shakspeare."—Vol. i. p. ccli.

† This fact, relative to Edmond Shakspeare, has been mentioned before, at some length; but the chronological form of the present detail required its brief re-admission here.

town, but, on his death, removing to New Place, which, with the chief part of his property, had been left by the poet to Mrs. Hall. Susanna was, on her nuptials with Dr. Hall, twenty-five years of age, and there can be little doubt but that her father was present at the celebration of an event so materially affecting the happiness of his child. *

It is highly probable, that, independent of his regular annual visit, family-occurrences frequently drew Shakspeare from London to the purer atmosphere of his native fields; for, in the year succeeding the marriage of his daughter, two events of this kind took place, of which one required his personal attendance. On the 21st of February, 1608, his granddaughter Elizabeth, daughter of Dr. Hall, was baptized †; and, on the 16th of the October following, he *stood* godfather for William Walker, the son of Henry Walker of Stratford, remembering the child in his will, with twenty shillings in gold, under the title of his "godson William Walker." ‡

The year 1609 is sufficiently commemorated by the general opinion, that, at this period, Shakspeare planted the *Mulberry Tree*, whose premature fate has been recorded in a preceding note.

"That Shakspeare planted this tree," observes Mr. Malone, "is as well authenticated as any thing of that nature can be. The Rev. Mr. Davenport informs me, that Mr. Hugh Taylor, (the father of his clerk,) who is now eighty-five years old, and an alderman of Warwick, where he at present resides, says, he lived, when a boy, at the next house to New Place; that his family had inhabited the house for almost three hundred years; that it was transmitted from father to son during the last and the present century; that this tree (of the fruit of which he had often eaten in his younger days, some of its branches hanging over his father's garden,) was planted by Shakspeare; and that till this was planted, there was no

* Vide Wheler's Guide, p. 27.

† Vide Stratford Register; Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 138.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 158. and note.

mulberry-tree in that neighbourhood. Mr. Taylor adds, that he was frequently, when a boy, at New Place, and that this tradition was preserved in the Clopton family, as well as in his own." *

That it was planted in the year above-mentioned, seems established by the facts, that, previous to the epoch in question, mulberry-trees, though not absolutely unknown in this country, were extremely scarce; and that, in 1609, King James, with a view to the encouragement of the silk manufacture, imported many hundred thousand of these trees from France, dispersing them all over England, accompanied by circular letters, written to induce the inhabitants to cultivate so useful, and at the same time so ornamental a production of the vegetable world.

It may safely be inferred, therefore, that our poet, on his visit this year to Stratford, had, in deference to the recommendation of his sovereign, as well as from his own taste and inclination, embellished his garden with this elegant tree.

With the exception of a Writ, issued out of the Stratford Court of Record, in June, 1610, for a small debt due to our author, scarcely a vestige of his existence, apart from his works, can be found for the next three years. This writ, and another issued the preceding year for a similar purpose, have the subjoined signature of *Greene*, being that of Thomas Greene, Esq., a cousin of the poet's; who, though resident in Stratford, and clerk to its corporation, had at the same time chambers in the Middle Temple, and was a barrister in Chancery. He is entitled to this notice, as being not only the relation, but the intimate friend of Shakspeare. †

We now approach the last year of Shakspeare's abode in London, which, there is every reason to suppose, continued to be in that part of it where we found him in 1596; where he assuredly was, according to Malone, in 1608, and where he no doubt remained, until, as

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 77.

† Wheler's History of Stratford, p. 144.

a. resident, he quitted the capital for ever. * Before he took this step, however, he became the purchaser of a tenement in Blackfriars, for which, according to a deed still extant †, he agreed to give one Henry Walker the sum of 140*l.*, of which he paid 80*l.* down, and mortgaged the premises for the remainder. The property acquired by this transaction, which took place on the 10th of March, 1613, is in his will bequeathed to his daughter Susanna, and being there described as “that messuage or tenement, with the appurtenances, wherein one John Robinson dwelleth, situate, lying, and being, in the Blackfriars in London, near the Wardrobe,” was probably let to this tenant soon after the purchase.

Among the arrangements which such a change of situation would almost necessarily require, it is reasonable to imagine, that his property in the Globe theatre would not be forgotten; but as this is neither mentioned in his will, nor he himself once noticed in the transactions of the theatre for 1613, we are entitled to infer, that he disposed of his interest in the concern previous to his leaving London.

That this event took place before the close of 1613, in all probability during the summer of the year, not only this circumstance relative to the theatre, and the general tradition, that a few years anterior to his death, he had left the metropolis for “ease, retirement, and the conversation of his friends” at Stratford, but two other circumstances of importance, will lead us to conclude. For, in the first place, it has been calculated that, at this period, his income from real and personal property was such, as to enable him to live handsomely in the country, independent of any profit from the stage‡; and secondly, we have found sufficient *data* for believing,

* Malone's Inquiry, p. 216.

† Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 150.

‡ Gildon says that Shakspeare left behind him an estate of 300*l.* per annum, equal to at least 1000*l.* per ann. at this day; but Mr. Malone doubts “whether all his property, real and personal, amounted to much more than 200*l.* per ann. which yet was a considerable fortune in those days.” “If,” he adds, “we rate the *New Place* with the appurtenances, and our poet's other houses in Stratford, at 60*l.* a year, and his house, &c. in the

that his literary career was terminated by the production of *The Twelfth Night*, and that this play was written in 1613.

These considerations, when united, impress us with a perfect conviction, that when Shakspeare bade adieu to London, he left it predetermined to devote the residue of his days exclusively to the cultivation of social and domestic happiness in the shades of retirement.

Blackfriars, (for which he paid 140*l.*) at 20*l.* a year, we have a rent-roll of 150*l.* per ann. Of his personal property it is not now possible to form any accurate estimate; but if we rate it at 500*l.*, money then bearing an interest of 10*l.* per cent. Shakspeare's total income was 200*l.* per ann."—Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. pp. 73, 74.

SHAKSPEARE AND HIS TIMES.

PART III.

SHAKSPEARE IN RETIREMENT.

CHAPTER I.

ANECDOTES RELATIVE TO SHAKSPEARE, DURING HIS RETIREMENT AT STRATFORD.

YES, high in reputation as a poet, favoured by the great and accomplished, and beloved by all who knew him, Shakspeare, after a long residence in the capital, to the rational pleasures of which he had contributed more than any other individual of his age, at length sought for leisure and repose on the banks of his native stream: perhaps wisely considering, that, as he had acquired a competency adequate to the gratifications of a well-regulated mind; life had other duties to perform, to the discharge of which, while health and vigour should remain, he was now called upon to dedicate a larger portion of his time.

The Genius of dramatic poetry may sigh over a determination thus early taken! but who shall blame what, from our knowledge of the man, we may justly conceive to have been his predominating motive, the hope that in the bosom of rural peace, aloof from the dissipations and seductions of the stage, he might the better prepare for that event which awaits us all, and which talents, such as his were, can

only, from the magnitude of the trust, render more awfully responsible.

That he was greatly honoured and respected at Stratford, we are induced to credit, not only from tradition, but from the tone and disposition of heart and intellect which his works every-where evince; and accordingly, Rowe has told us, that "his pleasurable wit and good-nature engaged him in the acquaintance, and entitled him to the friendship of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood." *

He had scarcely, however, settled in the place, when his property, and that of all his neighbours, was threatened with utter extinction; for, on the 9th of July, 1614, a fire broke out in the town, which according to a brief shortly afterwards granted for its relief, "within the space of lesse than two houres consumed and burnt fifty and fowre Dwelling Howses, many of them being very faire Houses, besides Barnes, Stables, and other Howses of Office, together with great Store of Corne, Hay, Straw, Wood and Timber therein, amounting to the value of Eight Thowsand Pounds and upwards: the force of which fier was so great (the Wind sitting full upon the Towne) that it dispersed into so many places thereof, whereby the whole Towne was in very great danger to have beene utterly consumed." † Shakspeare's house fortunately escaped.

On the 10th of July, 1614, our poet was deprived of his neighbour and acquaintance Mr. John Combe, a character whose celebrity is altogether founded on the epitaph which Shakspeare is said to have written upon him. The story, however, as related by Rowe, is injurious to the memory of its supposed author, by representing him as wantonly inflicting pain at the moment when his friendship and forbearance were most required. "In a pleasant conversation amongst their common friends," relates Rowe, "Mr. Combe told Shakspeare, in a laughing manner, that he fancied he intended to write his epitaph, if he happened to out-live him; and since he could not know

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. pp. 74—76.

† Wheler's History and Antiquities of Stratford, p. 15.

what might be said of him when he was dead, he desired it might be done immediately; upon which Shakspeare gave him these four verses:—

‘Ten in the hundred lies here engrav’d;
 ’Tis a hundred to ten his soul is not sav’d:
 If any man ask, Who lies in this tomb?
 Oh! ho! quoth the Devil, ’tis my John-a-Combe.’

But the sharpness of the satire is said to have stung the man so severely, that he never forgave it.”*

That Shakspeare, the gentle and unoffending Shakspeare as he is always represented, should have violated the hour of confidential gaiety by this sarcastic and condemnatory sally, is of itself sufficiently improbable; but we are happily released from weighing the inconsistencies accompanying such an anecdote, by the discovery of a prior and more authentic statement, which completely exonerates the bard, as it proves that the epitaph in question was written after the death of its object: “One time as he (Shakspeare) was at the taverne at Stratford,” narrates Aubrey, “Mr. Combes, an old usurer, was to be buried; he makes then this extemporary epitaph upon him:—

‘Ten in the hundred the devill allowes,
 But Combes will have twelve, he swears and he vowes;
 If any one aske, who lies in this tomb,
 Hoh! quoth the devill, ’tis my John-a-Combe.’”†

Mr. Combe, who, it appears, was buried two days after his‡ decease, was by no means a popular character, having amassed considerable wealth, through the medium of *usury*, a term then uniformly applied to the practice of all who took any *interest* or *usance* for money. The custom, though now honourable and familiar, was then deemed so odious, and even criminal, that to be a *money-lender*, on such a plan, was considered as an indelible reproach.

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. pp. 78—80.

† Letters by Eminent Persons, &c. 1813, vol. iii. p. 307.

‡ On the 12th of July, 1614.—See Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 82.

That Shakspeare, therefore, though intimate with the family, should, after the death of Mr. Combe, have uttered this impromptu (which the reader will observe is in Aubrey, without the condemnatory clause) as a censure on his well-known rapacity, may, without any charge of undue severity on his part, or even any breach of his customary suavity of temper, readily be granted.

It is certain that he continued on good terms with the relatives of the deceased, as in his Will he bequeaths to Mr. Thomas Combe, the nephew of the usurer, his sword, as a token of remembrance.

Nor is this the only epitaph which Shakspeare is said to have written; two others have been ascribed to him, one of which, as being given on the authority of Sir William Dugdale, "a testimony," observes Mr. Malone, "sufficient to ascertain its authenticity," and possessing besides strong internal marks of being genuine, requires admission into our text.

It is written in commemoration of Sir Thomas Stanley, Knight, who died some time after the year 1600, and is thus described by Sir William: —

"On the north side of the chancell (of Tongue church, in the county of Salop) stands a very stately tombe, supported with Corinthian columnes. It hath two figures of men in armour, thereon lying, the one below the arches and columnes, and the other above them, and this epitaph upon it: —

"Thomas Stanley, Knight, second son of Edward Earle of Derby, Lord Stanley and Strange, descended from the famielie of the Stanleys, married Margaret Vernon of Nether-Hadden, in the county of Derby, Knight, by whom he had issue two sons, Henry and Edward. Henry died an infant; Edward survived, to whom those lordships descended; and married the lady Lucie Percie, second daughter of the Earle of Northumberland: by her he had issue seaven daughters. She and her foure daughters, Arabella, Marie, Alice, and Priscilla, are interred under a monument in the church of Waltham, in the county of Essex. Thomas her son, died in his infancy, and is buried in the

parish church of Winwich in the county of Lancaster. The other three, Petronilla, Frances, and Venesia, are yet living.'

"These following verses were made by WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE, the late famous tragedian : —

"Written upon the east ende of this tombe.

' ASKE who lyes here, but do not weepe;
He is not dead, he doth but sleepe.
This stony register is for his bones,
His fame is more perpetual than these stōnes:
And his own goodness, with himself being gone,
Shall live, when earthly monument is none.'

"Written upon the west ende thereof.

' NOT monumental stone preserves our fame,
Nor skye-aspiring pyramids our name.
The memory of him for whom this stands,
Shall out-live marble, and defacer's hands.
When all to time's consumption shall be given,
Stanley, for whom this stands, shall stand in heaven.' " *

It has been well remarked by Mr. Malone, that the fifth and last lines of this epitaph "bear very strong marks of the hand of Shakspeare."

* "Preserved," says Mr. Malone, "in a collection of Epitaphs, at the end of the Visitation of Salop, taken by Sir William Dugdale in the year 1664, now remaining in the College of Arms, chap. xxxv. fol. 20.; a transcript of which Sir Isaac Heard, Garter Principal King at Arms, has obligingly transmitted to me."—Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 90.

The other epitaph alluded to in the text, is from "a Manuscript volume of Poems by William Herrick and others, in the hand-writing of the time of Charles I., among Rawlinson's Collections in the Bodleian Library.

AN EPITAPH.

' When God was pleas'd, the world unwilling yet,
Elias James to nature pay'd his debt,
And here repositeth : as he liv'd, he dyde;
The saying in him strongly verifide, —
Such life, such death : then, the known truth to tell,
He liv'd a godly life, and dyde as well.

WM. SHAKSPEARE.' "

It appears from Mr. Malone's researches, that the James's were a family living at Stratford both during and after our poet's time. Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 90.

As every circumstance relative to our author is, however minute, possessed of interest, the following particulars and conversation concerning a negociation for the enclosure of some land near Stratford in 1614, and which were first communicated to the public by Mr. Wheler, shall be given in that gentleman's own words.

"About the year 1614," he relates, "there was an intention of inclosing Welcombe field, in this parish, where part of Shakspeare's landed property lay, which he had purchased in 1602 of William and John Combe, and over which field the tithes extended, of which he purchased a moiety in 1605. Shakspeare was therefore doubly interested in this inclosure; and from some memorandums or notes commenced in London, but concluded at Stratford, by Thomas Green, Esq. (the owner of part of the tithes, perhaps the other moiety,) a relation of Shakspeare's, — the following particulars of his conversation with Shakspeare are extracted.

'Rec. 16. No. 1614, at 4 o'clock afr. noon, a Lre. from Mr. Bayly, and Mr. Alderman, (the Bailif and chief Alderman of Stratford-upon-Avon,) dated 12. No. 1614, touchyng the inclosure busynes.'

'Jovis 17. No. (1614) My Cosen Shakspeare comyng yesterday to town, I went to see him how he did. He told me that they (the parties wishing to inclose) assured him they ment to inclose no further than to Gospel bush, and so upp straight (leaving out pt. of the Dyngles to the field,) to the gate in Clopton hedg and take in Salisbury's peece; and that they mean in Aprill to svey. the land and then to gyve satisfaccion and not before: and he and Mr. Hall, (Shakspeare's son-in-law, probably present) say they think yr. (there) will be nothyng done at all.'

"Mr. Green, (the common clerk to this corporation, who were adverse to the inclosure) returned to Stratford at the latter end of November, or beginning of December, 1614, and continued his notes until the 23d of December; upon which day it appears that letters were written by the corporation to Shakspeare and to Mr. Manwaring, (another proprietor, resident in London,) both of whom seem to have been desirous of inclosing. Mr. Green's memorandum, as

far as it can be transcribed, being almost illegible and the paper somewhat damaged, is as follows:—

“ ‘ 23. Dec. (1614.) a Hall. Lres. wrytten, one to Mr. Manyring—another to Mr. Shakspeare, with almost all the company’s hands to eyther. I also wrytte myself to my Csn. (Cousin) Shakspear, the coppyes of all our . . . then also a note of the inconvenyences wold . . . by the inclosure.’ ”

“ From a copy of the corporations letter to ‘ Arthur Mannering, Esq.’ (then residing at the Lord Chancellor’s house, perhaps in some official capacity) as noticed by Green to have been written on the 23d of December, 1614, it appears that he was apprized of the injury to be expected from the intended inclosure; reminded of the damage that Stratford, then ‘lying in the ashes of desolation,’ had sustained from recent fires; and entreated to forbear the inclosure. The letter written to Shakspeare, the author has not been sufficiently fortunate to discover; but it was probably to the same effect. A petition was presented from the corporation to the Lords of the Privy Council, requesting their injunction to William Combe, Esq. of Stratford College, then High Sheriff of this County; who, being proprietor of considerable estates at Welcombe, was desirous of an inclosure. Nothing, however, was done, as Shakspeare had surmised; and the fields remained open until the year 1774.” *

Early in 1616 our poet married his youngest daughter Judith to Mr. Thomas Quiney, a vintner in Stratford. The ceremony took place on February the 10th, 1616, the bridegroom being four years older than the bride, who had, however, completed her thirty-second year.

The daughters of Shakspeare appear to have been, like those of Milton, ignorant of the art of writing; Judith, at least, in attesting a deed still extant, being under the necessity of making her mark, which is accompanied by the explanatory appendage of “*Signum*

* Wheeler’s Guide to Stratford, pp. 22—25.

Judeth Shakspeare." * The omission, however, is less extraordinary in the days of Shakspeare than in those of his great successor; the education of women, during the reigns of Elizabeth and James, being in general calculated, with a few splendid exceptions, principally in the upper classes of society, for the discharge of mere domestic duties; and when, to be able to read was considered as a very distinguishing accomplishment.

The fruit of this marriage was three sons, Shakspeare, Richard, and Thomas Quiney; the first dying in his infancy, the second in his twenty-first year, and the third in his twentieth year; so that, as *Elizabeth*, the daughter of *Susanna*, by Dr. Hall, had no issue by her two husbands, Thomas Nash, Esq. and Sir John Barnard, she proved the last lineal descendant of her grandfather.

It was very shortly after the marriage of Judith, that our author, being *in perfect health and memory*, deemed it necessary to make his Will; a document which appears to have been drawn up on the 25th of February, 1616, though not executed until the 25th of the following month. †

That the event, for which this was a proper preparatory act, should so *rapidly* have followed, could be little in the contemplation of one who had not reached his fifty-second year, and who, according to his own account, was *in perfect health and memory*. Yet we may venture to infer, from what tradition has left us of his life and character, that few were better prepared for the transition, that few could be found, over whom, when the event had occurred, with more justice might it be said, —

“ After life’s fitful fever, he sleeps well ! ”

* Vide Wheler’s Guide, p. 21.

† “ *February*,” says Mr. Malone, “ was first written, and afterwards struck out, and *March* written over it.” — Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 154.

CHAPTER II.

THE DEATH OF SHAKSPEARE — OBSERVATIONS ON HIS WILL — ON THE DISPOSITION AND MORAL CHARACTER OF SHAKSPEARE — ON THE MONUMENT ERECTED TO HIS MEMORY, AND ON THE ENGRAVING OF HIM PREFIXED TO THE FIRST FOLIO EDITION OF HIS PLAYS — CONCLUSION.

THE death of Shakspeare, of which the closing paragraph of the last chapter had afforded us an intimation, took place on Tuesday, the 23d of April, 1616, on his birth-day, and when he had exactly completed his fifty-second year. It is remarkable, that on the same day expired, in Spain, his great and amiable contemporary, Cervantes; the world being thus deprived, nearly at the same moment, of the two most original writers which modern Europe has produced.

That not the smallest account of the disease which terminated so valuable a life, should have been transmitted to posterity, is perhaps equally singular; and the more so, as our poet was, no doubt, attended by his son-in-law, Dr. Hall, who was then forty years of age; and who should have recollected, that the circumstances which led to the dissolution of such a man, had, whether professionally important or not, a claim to preservation and publicity. But the age was a most incurious one, as to the personal history of literary men; and Hall, who left for publication a manuscript collection of cases, selected from not less than a thousand diseases, has omitted the only one which could have secured to his work any permanent interest or value.*

On the second day after his decease, the remains of Shakspeare

* These Cases were afterwards translated from the original Latin by James Cooke, a Surgeon at Warwick, under the title of "Select Observations on English Bodies; or Cures, both empericall and historical, performed upon very eminent persons in desperate diseases." London, 1657. 12mo.

were committed to the grave ; being buried on the 25th of April, on the north side of the chancel of the great church of Stratford.

Fortunately, some light has been thrown upon the domestic circumstances of the poet, by the preservation of his Will, yet extant in the Prerogative Court, and which, though often published, we have again introduced, as a necessary appendage to our work.

The most striking features in this document, are the apparent neglect of his wife, and the favouritism exhibited with regard to his eldest daughter. Mrs. Shakspeare, indeed, was so entirely forgotten in the original Will, that the only bequest which her husband makes her, of his "second best bed, with the furniture," is introduced by an interlineation.

This omission, and the trifling nature of the legacy, have given birth to some conjectures on the part of his biographers and commentators. Oldys, misapplying the language of one of his sonnets, has hinted, that the poet entertained some doubts as to the fidelity of his beautiful wife ; an intimation which soon after occasioned a curious controversy between Messrs. Steevens and Malone ; the latter impeaching, and the former defending the conjugal affection of their bard. "His wife had not wholly escaped his memory," observes Mr. Malone ; "he had forgot her, — he had recollected her, — but so recollected her, as more strongly to mark how little he esteemed her ; he had already (as it is vulgarly expressed,) cut her off, not indeed with a shilling, but with an old bed." "That our poet was jealous of this lady," remarks Mr. Steevens, "is an unwarrantable conjecture. Having, in times of health and prosperity, provided for her by settlement, (or knowing that her father had already done so,) he bequeathed to her at his death, not merely *an old piece of furniture*, but perhaps, as a mark of peculiar tenderness,

" The very bed that on his bridal night
Received him to the arms of Belvidera." *

* Malone's Supplement, vol. i. pp. 653. 657. 655.

In fact, we do know that Shakspeare married for love, but we do not know of any the smallest intimation or hint, previous to the wild conjecture of Oldys, that coolness or estrangement had subsisted between the poet and his wife. We have every right, therefore, to conclude, that Mrs. Shakspeare had been previously and amply provided for, either by her husband, or by her father, whose circumstances are represented by Rowe, as having been "substantial." We may, at least, rest satisfied, as well from the known integrity of Shakspeare, as from the humanity of his disposition, that nothing harsh or unjust had been committed by him on this occasion. Indeed, had the case been otherwise, the love of mankind for propagating what tends to deteriorate superior characters, would, doubtless, have protected such a family-anecdote from oblivion.

Why the executorship was intrusted to Dr. Hall and his lady, may be readily conceived to have originated, independent of their being the persons principally concerned, in the knowledge of the poet that the former, who was a man of business, was much better calculated, than Mrs. Shakspeare could possibly be, for carrying the will into execution.

That superior qualities of the head and heart, more especially when united, are entitled, even under the parental roof, to marked distinction, who will deny? and that such were the blended qualities which rendered Susanna the favourite of her father may be certainly inferred from the circumstance that, while we hear nothing of Judith, but that she is supposed to have married contrary to her father's wishes, of Susanna we are told that she was "witty above her sex;" that she had "something of Shakspeare" in her, and, above all, that she was "wise to salvation," that she "wept with all that wept, yet set herself to cheer them up with comforts." To a child thus great and good, we need not wonder that Shakspeare paid a delighted deference.*

* I recollect an engraving, from a picture by Westall, of Milton composing *Paradise Lost*, in which he is attended by his two daughters. Shakspeare and his favourite Susanna might furnish a pleasing subject for the same elegant artist.

It may be objected that, however superior the elder daughter might be in point of intellect and moral sensibility, if the younger had done nothing worse than marry without her father's approbation, no great difference should have been made between them in the distribution of his property. But we must recollect, that they moved in different circles, that whilst Susanna was united to a physician, who being in great practice, and intimate with the first families in the neighbourhood, was obliged to support an establishment of much expense, Judith was the wife of a vintner, a station comparatively inferior, and not necessarily requiring such an expenditure. Under these considerations we shall probably be induced to acquit the poet of any undue partiality, and to view the provisions of his Will as neither disproportioned to the stations nor inadequate to the necessities of the parties concerned.

To the disposition and moral character of Shakspeare, tradition has ever borne the most uniform and favourable testimony. And, indeed; had she been silent on the subject, his own works would have whispered to us the truth; would have told us, in almost every page, of the gentleness, the benevolence, and the goodness of his heart. For, though no one has exceeded him in painting the stronger passions of the human breast, it is evident that he delighted most in the expression of loveliness and simplicity, and was ever willing to descend from the loftiest soarings of imagination, to sport with innocence and beauty. Though "the world of spirits and of nature," says the admirable Schlegel, "had laid all their treasures at his feet: in strength a demi-god, in profundity of view a prophet, in all-seeing wisdom a protecting spirit of a higher order, he yet lowered himself to mortals as if unconscious of his superiority, and was as open and unassuming as a child." *

That a temper of this description, and combined with such talents, should be the object of sincere and ardent friendship, can excite no

* Lectures on Dramatic Literature, vol. ii. p. 138.

surprise. "I loved the man," says Jonson, with a noble burst of enthusiasm, "and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. He was, indeed, honest; and of an open and free nature;" and Rowe, repeating the uncontradicted rumour of times past, has told us, — "that every one, who had a true taste of merit, and could distinguish men, had generally a just value and esteem for him;" adding, "that his exceeding candour and good-nature must certainly have inclined all the gentler part of the world to love him." *

No greater proof, indeed, can be given of the felicity of his temper, and the sweetness of his manners, than that all who addressed him, seem to have uniformly connected his name with the epithets *worthy*, *gentle*, or *beloved* †; nor was he backward in returning this esteem, many of his sonnets indicating the warmth with which he cherished the remembrance of his friends. Thus the thirtieth opens with the following pensive retrospect: —

" When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh —
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night;"

and in the thirty-first he tenderly exclaims, —

" How many a holy and obsequious tear
Hath dear religious love stolen from mine eye,
As interest of the dead !"

Another very fascinating feature in the character of Shakspeare, was the almost constant cheerfulness and serenity of his mind: he was "verie good company," says Aubrey, "and of a very ready, and *pleasant*, and *smooth* witt." ‡ In this, as Mr. Godwin has justly ob-

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 67.

† "My gentle Shakspeare" is the language of Jonson, in his Poem to the memory of our bard: and see the Commendatory Poems prefixed to the old editions of our author's works, in Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii.

‡ Letters by Eminent Persons, from the Bodleian Library, vol. iii. p. 307.

served, he bore a striking resemblance to Chaucer, who was remarkable for the placidity and cheerfulness of his disposition * ; nor can there, probably, be a surer indication of that peace and sunshine of the soul which surpasses all other gifts, than this habitual tone of mind.

That Shakspeare was entitled to its possession from his *moral* virtues, we have already seen ; and that, in a *religious* point of view, he had a claim to the enjoyment, the numerous passages in his works, which breathe a spirit of pious gratitude and devotional rapture, will sufficiently declare. In fact, upon the topic of religious, as upon that of ethic wisdom, no profane poet can furnish us with a greater number of just and luminous aphorisms ; passages which dwell upon the heart and reach the soul, for they have issued from lips of fire, from conceptions worthy of a superior nature, from feelings solemn and unearthly.

To these observations on the disposition and moral character of Shakspeare, we must add a few remarks on the *taste* which he seems to have possessed, in an exquisite degree, for all the forms of beauty, whether resulting from nature or from art. No person can study his writings, indeed, without perceiving, that, throughout the vast range of being, whatever is lovely and harmonious, whatever is sweet in expression, or graceful in proportion, was constantly present to his mind ; that

————— “ on every part,
In earth, or air, the meadow’s purple stores,
The moon’s mild radiance, or the virgin’s form,
————— he saw pourtray’d
That uncreated beauty, which delights
The mind supreme.” †

Nor was he a less delighted worshipper of the imitative efforts of art. With what taste and enthusiasm, he has spoken of the

* Life of Chaucer, vol. iv. p. 175.

† Akenside’s Pleasures of Imagination, book i.

effects of music, has been already observed; but it remains to notice in what a sublime spirit of piety he refers this concord of sweet sounds, to its source in that transcript of Almighty, "the world's harmonious volume:—"

" There's not the smallest orb, which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eye'd cherubins:
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it." *

Of the beauties of painting and sculpture he appears to have had a keen and lively discernment. On Julio Romano, the most poetical, perhaps, of painters, he has pronounced, that "*had he himself eternity, and could put breath into his work, 'he' would beguile Nature of her custom †;*" and of his masterly appreciation of the art of sculpture, the following lines from the *The Winter's Tale*, where Paulina unveils to Leontes the supposed statue of Hermione, afford evidence beyond all praise:—

" *Paul.* ————— Here it is: prepare
To see the life as lively mock'd, as ever
Still sleep mock'd death: behold; and say, 'tis well.
(*Paulina undraws a curtain, and discovers a statue.*)
I like your silence, it the more shews off
Your wonder: but yet speak; —
Comes it not something near?
" *Leont.* Her natural posture! —
————— Oh, thus she stood,
Even with such life of majesty, —
————— when first I woo'd her! —
Would I were dead, but that, methinks already —
What was he, that did make it? See, my lord,
Would you not deem it breath'd? and that these veins
Did verily bear blood?
Paul. Masterly done:
The very life seems warm upon her lip.

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 374. Act v. sc. 1.

† Ibid. vol. ix. p. 408. Act v. sc. 2.

Leont. The fixure of her eye has motion in't,
As we are mock'd with art: —

Still methinks,
There is an air comes from her: what fine chizel
Could ever yet cut breath? —

Paul. ————— Shall I draw the curtain?

Leont. No, not these twenty years.*

To the memory of a poet who, independent of the matchless talents which he has exhibited in his own peculiar province, had shown such proofs of his attachment to the sister arts, some tribute, from these departments of genius, might naturally be expected, and was certainly due. Nor was it long ere the debt of gratitude was paid; *before* the year 1623, a monument, containing a bust of the poet, had been erected in Stratford Church, immediately above the grave which inclosed his hallowed relics. The tradition of his native town is, that this bust was copied from a cast after nature. † It is placed beneath an arch, and between two Corinthian columns of black marble, and represents the poet in a sitting posture, with a cushion spread before him, holding a pen in his right hand, whilst his left rests upon a scroll of paper. The entablature exhibits the arms of Shakspeare surmounted by a death's head, with an infantine form sitting on each side; that on the right supporting, in the same hand, a spade, and the figure on the left, whose eyes are closed, reposing its right hand on a skull, whilst the other holds an inverted torch. ‡

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ix. pp. 412—416. Act v. sc. 3.

† Wheler's Guide to Stratford, p. 87. — "If Shakspeare's and Lord Totness's tombs," says Mr. Wheler, "were erected by one and the same artist, circumstances not at all improbable, it would not appear that he (Thomas Stanton, the sculptor) had any want of skill in preserving a resemblance; for the monumental likeness of Lord Totness strongly resembles the capital paintings of him in Clopton House, and at Gorhambury, in Hertfordshire, as well as the engraving of him prefixed to his '*Hibernia Pacata*,' a posthumous publication in 1633."—Vide p. 89.

‡ The arms on this monument, are, — *Or, on a bend sable, a tilting spear of the first, point upwards, headed argent.* — Crest, *A falcon displayed argent, supporting a spear in pale or.*

On a tablet below the cushion are engraved the two following inscriptions :

“ Judicio Pylivm, genio Socratem, arte Maronem,
Terra tegit, popvlvs mœret, Olympvs habet.”

“ Stay passenger, why goest thou by so fast,
Read, if thou canst, whom envious death hath plast
Within this monument, Shakspeare; with whome
Quick nature dide; whose name doth deck ys tombe
Far more than cost; sieth all yt. he hath writt,
Leaves living art, but page to serve his witt.

Obiit Ano. Doi. 1616. Ætatis 53. Die 23. Ap.”

A flat stone which covers his grave, presents us with these singular lines, said to have been written by the bard himself, and which were probably suggested, as Mr. Malone has remarked, “ by an apprehension that ‘ his ’ remains might share the same fate with those of the rest of his countrymen, and be added to the immense pile of human bones deposited in the charnel-house at Stratford:—* ”

“ Good frend, for Jesvs sake forbear
To digg the dvst enclosed heare;
Blese be ye. man yt. spares thes stones,
And cvrst be he yt. moves my bones.”

We view the monumental bust of Shakspeare, observes Mr. Britton, “ as a family record; as a memorial raised by the affection and esteem of his relatives, to keep alive contemporary admiration, and to excite the glow of enthusiasm in posterity. This invaluable ‘ effigy ’ is attested by tradition, consecrated by time, and preserved in the inviolability of its own simplicity and sacred station. It was evidently executed immediately after the poet’s decease; and probably under the superintendence of his son-in-law, Dr. Hall, and his daughter; the latter of whom, according to her epitaph, was ‘ witty above her sexe,’ and therein like her father. Leonard Digges, in a poem prais-

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 90.

ing the works and worth of Shakspeare, and published within seven years after his death, speaks of the Stratford monument as a well-known object. Dugdale, in his 'Antiquities of Warwickshire,' 1656, gives a plate of the monument, but drawn and engraved in a truly tasteless and inaccurate style, and observes in the text, that the poet was *famous*, and thus entitled to such distinction. Langbaine, in his 'Account of English Dramatic Poets,' 1691, pronounces the Stratford bust Shakspeare's 'true effigies.' These are decided proofs of its antiquity; and we may safely conclude that it was intended to be a faithful portrait of the poet. —

"The Bust is the size of life; it is formed out of a block of soft stone; and was originally painted over in imitation of nature. The hands and face were of flesh colour, the eyes of a light hazle, and the hair and beard auburn; the doublet or coat was scarlet, and covered with a loose black gown, or tabard, without sleeves; the upper part of the cushion was green, the under half crimson, and the tassels gilt.* Such appear to have been the original features of this important, but neglected or insulted bust. After remaining in this state above one hundred and twenty years, Mr. John Ward, grandfather to Mrs. Siddons and Mr. Kemble, caused it to be 'repaired,' and the original colours preserved †, in 1748, from the profits of the representation of Othello. This was a generous, and apparently judicious act; and therefore very unlike the next alteration it

* "Although the practice of painting statues and busts to imitate nature, is repugnant to good taste, and must be stigmatized as vulgar and hostile to every principle of art, yet when an effigy is thus coloured and transmitted to us, as illustrative of a particular age or people, and as a record of fashion and costume, it becomes an interesting relic, and should be preserved with as much care as an Etruscan vase, or an early specimen of Raffael's painting; and the man who deliberately defaces or destroys either, will ever be regarded as a criminal in the high court of criticism and taste. From an absence of this feeling, many truly curious, and, to us, important subjects have been destroyed. Among which is to be noticed a vast monument of antiquity on Marbrough Downs, in Wiltshire; and which, though once the most stupendous work of human labour and skill in Great Britain, is now nearly demolished." Britton.

† "Wheler's Guide, p. 90."

was subjected to in 1793. In that year, Mr. Malone caused the bust to be covered over with one or more coats of white paint; and thus at once destroyed its original character, and greatly injured the expression of the face.* Having absurdly characterized this expression for ‘pertness,’ and therefore ‘differing from that placid composure and thoughtful gravity so perceptible in his *original* portrait, and his best prints,’ Mr. M. could have few scruples about injuring or destroying it. In this very act, and in this line of comment, our zealous annotator has passed an irrevocable sentence on his own judgment. If the opinions of some of the best sculptors and painters of the metropolis are entitled to respect and confidence on such a subject, that of Mr. Malone is at once false and absurd. They justly remark, that the face indicates cheerfulness, good humour, suavity, benignity and intelligence. These characteristics are developed by the mouth and its muscles — by the cheeks — eye-brows — forehead — and skull; and hence they rationally infer, that the face is worked from nature.”†

With these observations, which seem the result of a just and discriminating judgment, we feel happy in coinciding; having had an

* “Mr. Wheler, in his interesting *Topographical Vade Mecum*, relating to Stratford, has given publicity to the following stanzas, which were written in the Album, at Stratford church, by one of the visitors to Shakspeare’s tomb.”

“Stranger, to whom this Monument is shown,
Invoke the Poet’s curses on Malone;
Whose meddling zeal his barbarous taste displays,
And daubs his tomb-stone, as he marr’d his plays.”

† “Britton’s Remarks on the Monumental Bust of Shakspeare.” These Remarks, which were published on April 23. 1816, “The Anniversary of the Birth and Death of Shakspeare, and the Second Centenary after his Decease,” are accompanied by an admirably executed Mezzotinto of Shakspeare from the Monumental Bust; engraved by William Ward, from a Painting by Thomas Phillips, Esq. R. A. after a Cast made from the original Bust by George Bullock.

Mr. Britton had previously expressed a similar opinion of the merits and fidelity of this Bust, in some very ingenious and well-written “Remarks on the Life and Writings of Shakspeare,” prefixed to an edition of the Poet’s Plays, by Whittingham and Arliss.

opportunity, in the summer of 1815, of visiting this celebrated monument, for the purpose of gratifying what we conceive to be a laudable curiosity. When on the spot, we felt convinced, from the circumstances which have been preserved relative to the erection of this bust ; from the period of life at which the poet died, and above all, from the character, distinctness and expression of the features themselves, that this invaluable relique may be considered as a correct resemblance of our beloved bard.

That he was "*a handsome well shaped man,*" we are expressly informed by Aubrey, and universal tradition has attributed to him *cheerfulness* and *good temper*. Now the Stratford effigy tells us all this, together with the character of his age, in language which cannot be mistaken ; and it once superadded to the little which has been recorded of his person, what we have no doubt was accurately given by the original painter of his bust, the colour of his eyes and the beautiful auburn of his hair.

But it tells us still more ; for the impress of that mighty mind which ranged at will through all the realms of nature and of fancy, and which, though incessantly employed in the personification of passion and of feeling, was ever great without effort, and at peace within itself, is visible in the exquisite harmony and symmetry of the whole head and countenance, which, not only in each separate feature, in the swell and expansion of the forehead, in the commanding sweep of the eye brow, in the undulating outline of the nose, and in the open sweetness of the lips, but in their combined and integral expression, breathe of him, of whom it may be said, in his own emphatic language, that

" We ne'er shall look upon his like again."

Very shortly after the erection of this monument, appeared the first folio edition of our author's plays, in the title-page of which, bearing the date of 1623, is found the earliest print of Shakspeare, an engraving by Martin Droeshout, with the following attestation of its verisimilitude from the pen of Ben Jonson :

“ TO THE READER.

“ THIS figure that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakspeare cut;
Wherein the graver had a strife
With nature, to out-do the life.
O, could he but have drawn his wit,
As well in brass, as he hath hit
His face, the print would then surpass
All that was ever writ in brass;
But since he cannot, reader, look,
Not on his picture, but his book.”

Between the wretched engraving, thus undeservedly eulogised, and the monumental bust at Stratford, there is certainly such a resemblance as to prove, that the assertion of Jonson with regard to its likeness, was not *altogether* without foundation; but, as Mr. Steevens has well remarked, “ Shakspeare’s countenance deformed by Droe-shout, resembles the sign of Sir Roger de Coverley, when it had been changed into a Saracen’s head; on which occasion The Spectator observes, that the features of the gentle Knight were still apparent through the lineaments of the ferocious Mussulman.” *

There is, however, a much greater, nay, a very close and remarkable similitude, between the engraving, from the Felton Shakspeare, and the bust at Stratford. What basis Mr. Gilchrist may have had for his observation, that *Mr. Steevens failed in communicating to the public his confidence in the integrity of Mr. Felton’s picture*, we know not †; but, if the most striking affinity to the monumental effigy, be deemed, as we think it ought to be, a proof of authenticity, this picture is entitled to our confidence; for whether we consider the general contour of the head, or the particular conformation of the forehead, eyes, nose, or mouth, the resemblance is complete; the only perceptible deviation being in the construction of the eye-brows, which, instead of forming nearly a perfect arch, as in the sculpture,

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 19.

† Gifford’s Jonson, vol. i. p. ccclviii.

have an horizontal direction, and are somewhat elevated towards the temples. *

We have now reached the termination of a work, of which, whatever shall be its reception with the public, even Diffidence itself may say, that it has been prosecuted with incessant labour and unwearied research; with an ardent desire to give it a title to acceptance, and with an anxiety, which has proved injurious to health, that it should be deemed, not altogether unworthy of the bard whose name it bears.

It has also been a labour of love, and, though much indisposition has accompanied several of the years devoted to its construction, it is closed with a mingled sensation of gratitude, regret, and hope; of gratitude, for what of health and strength has been spared to its author; of regret, in relinquishing, what, with all its concomitant anxieties, has been often productive of rational delight; and of hope, that, in the inevitable hour which is fast approaching, no portion of its pages shall suggest a thought, which can add poignancy to suffering, or bitterness to recollection.

* These observations are founded upon the fidelity of the engraving prefixed to Reed's edition of Shakspeare, 1803.

APPENDIX.

REVIEWS

SHAKSPEARE'S WILL.

(From the Original, in the Office of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.)

Vicesimo quinto die Martii, Anno Regni Domini nostri Jacobi nunc Regis Angliæ, &c. decimo quarto, et Scotiæ quadragesimo nono. Anno Domini, 1616.

IN the name of God, Amen. I WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick, gent. in perfect health and memory*, (God be praised!) do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form following; that is to say:

First, I commend my soul into the hands of God my Creator, hoping, and assuredly believing, through the only merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour, to be made partaker of life everlasting; and my body to the earth whereof it is made.

Item, I give and bequeath unto my daughter Judith, one hundred and fifty pounds of lawful English money, to be paid unto her in manner and form following; that is to say, one hundred pounds in discharge of her marriage-portion within one year after my decease, with consideration after the rate of two shillings in the pound† for so long time as the same shall be unpaid unto her after my decease; and the fifty pounds residue thereof, upon her surrendering of, or giving of such sufficient security as the overseers of this my will shall like of, to surrender or grant, all her estate and right that shall descend or come unto her after my decease, or that she now hath, of,

* From the short period which elapsed between the date of this Will and the death of the poet, we must infer, that the "malady which at so early a period of life deprived England of its brightest ornament," was sudden in its attack, and rapid in its progress.

† *Ten per cent.*, we find from this passage, was the usual interest of money in our author's days; and in the epitaph on Mr. Combe, as preserved by Aubrey, this old gentleman is censured for taking twelve per cent.:—

"But Combes will have twelve, he swears and he vows."

in, or to, one copyhold tenement, with the appurtenances, lying and being in Stratford-upon-Avon aforesaid, in the said county of Warwick, being parcel or holden of the manor of Rowington, unto my daughter Susanna Hall, and her heirs for ever.

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said daughter Judith one hundred and fifty pounds more, if she, or any issue of her body, be living at the end of three years next ensuing the day of the date of this my will, during which time my executors to pay her consideration from my decease according to the rate aforesaid: and if she die within the said term without issue of her body, then my will is, and I do give and bequeath one hundred pounds thereof to my niece * Elizabeth Hall, and the fifty pounds to be set forth by my executors during the life of my sister Joan Hart, and the use and profit thereof coming, shall be paid to my said sister Joan, and after her decease the said fifty pounds shall remain amongst the children of my said sister, equally to be divided amongst them; but if my said daughter Judith be living at the end of the said three years, or any issue of her body, then my will is, and so I devise and bequeath the said hundred and fifty pounds to be set out by my executors and overseers for the best benefit of her and her issue, and the stock not to be paid unto her so long as she shall be married and covert baron; but my will is, that she shall have the consideration yearly paid unto her during her life, and after her decease the said stock and consideration to be paid to her children, if she have any, and if not, to her executors or assigns, she living the said term after my decease: provided that if such husband as she shall at the end of the said three years be married unto, or at any (time) after, do sufficiently assure unto her, and the issue of her body, lands answerable to the portion by this my will given unto her, and to be adjudged so by my executors and overseers, then my will is, that the said hundred and fifty pounds shall be paid to such husband as shall make such assurance, to his own use. †

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said sister Joan twenty pounds, and all my wearing apparel, to be paid and delivered within one year after my decease; and I do will and devise unto her the house, with the appurtenances,

* ——— to my niece —) “Elizabeth Hall was our poet’s grand-daughter. So, in *Othello*, act i. sc. 1., Iago says to Brabantio: ‘You’ll have your *nephews* neigh to you;’ meaning his grandchildren.” — Malone.

† Judith died at Stratford, aged 77, and was buried there Feb. 9th, 1662.

in Stratford, wherein she dwelleth, for her natural life, under the yearly rent of twelve-pence. *

Item, I give and bequeath unto her three sons, William Hart, — Hart †, and Michael Hart, five pounds a-piece, to be paid within one year after my decease.

Item, I give and bequeath unto the said Elizabeth Hall all my plate (except my broad silver and gilt bowl) that I now have at the date of this my will. ‡

Item, I give and bequeath unto the poor of Stratford aforesaid ten pounds; to Mr. Thomas Combe § my sword; to Thomas Russel, esqr. five pounds; and to Francis Collins || of the borough of Warwick, gent. thirteen pounds six shillings and eight-pence, to be paid within one year after my decease.

Item, I give and bequeath to Hamlet (*Hamnet*) Sadler ¶, twenty-six shil-

* Joan Hart, the poet's sister, was buried at Stratford, Nov. 4th, 1646.

† "It is singular that neither Shakspeare nor any of his family should have recollected the Christian name of his nephew, who was born at Stratford but eleven years before the making of his will. His Christian name was *Thomas*; and he was baptized in that town, July 24, 1605." — Malone.

‡ Elizabeth Hall, the poet's grand-daughter, was married at Stratford, on April 22d, 1626, to Thomas Nash, Esq., and after the decease of this gentleman on April 4th, 1647, she again entered into the marriage-state with Sir John Barnard of Abington, in Northamptonshire. The ceremony took place at Billesley near Stratford, on the 5th of June, 1649, and Lady Barnard died, without issue by either of her husbands, at Abington, and was buried there on the 17th of February, 1669-70.

"If any of Shakspeare's manuscripts," remarks Mr. Malone, "remained in his grand-daughter's custody at the time of her second marriage, (and some *letters* at least she surely must have had,) they probably were then removed to the house of her new husband at Abington. Sir Hugh Clopton, who was born two years after her death, mentioned to Mr. Macklin, in the year 1742, an old tradition that she had carried away with her from Stratford many of her grandfather's papers. On the death of Sir John Barnard they must have fallen into the hands of Mr. Edward Bagley, Lady Barnard's executor; and if any descendant of that gentleman be now living, in his custody they probably remain." — Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 98.

§ "Mr. Thomas Combe was baptized at Stratford, Feb. 9, 1588-9, so that he was twenty-seven years old at the time of Shakspeare's death. He died at Stratford in July 1657, aged 68; and his elder brother William died at the same place, Jan. 30, 1666-7, aged 80. Mr. Thomas Combe by his will, made June 20, 1656, directed his executors to convert all his personal property into money, and to lay it out in the purchase of lands, to be settled on William Combe, the eldest son of John Combe, of All-church, in the county of Worcester, gent., and his heirs male; remainder to his two brothers successively. Where, therefore, our poet's sword has wandered, I have not been able to discover." — Malone.

|| "*Francis Collins* —) "This gentleman, who was the son of Mr. Walter Collins, was baptized at Stratford, Dec. 24, 1582." — Malone.

¶ "*Hamnet Sadler* was godfather to Shakspeare's only son, who was called after him. Mr. Sadler, I believe, was born about the year 1550, and died at Stratford-upon-Avon, in October,

lings eight-pence, to buy him a ring ; to William Reynolds, gent. twenty-six shillings eight-pence, to buy him a ring ; to my godson William Walker twenty shillings in gold ; to Anthony Nash *, gent. twenty-six shillings eight-pence ; and to Mr. John Nash † twenty-six shillings eight-pence ; and to my fellowes, John Hemynge ‡, Richard Burbage §, and Henry Cundell ||, twenty-six shillings eight-pence a-piece, to buy them rings.

Item, I give, will, bequeath, and devise, unto my daughter Susanna Hall ¶, for better enabling of her to perform this my will, and towards the performance thereof, all that capital messuage or tenement, with the appurtenances, in Stratford aforesaid, called the New Place, wherein I now dwell, and two messuages or tenements, with the appurtenances, situate, lying, and being in Henley-street, within the borough of Stratford aforesaid ; and all my barns, stables, orchards, gardens, lands, tenements, and hereditaments whatsoever, situate, lying, and being, or to be had, received, perceived, or taken, within the towns, hamlets, villages, fields, and grounds of Stratford-upon-Avon, Old Stratford, Bishopton, and Welcombe, or in any of them, in the said county of Warwick ; and also all that messuage or tenement, with

1624. His wife, Judith Sadler, who was god-mother to Shakspeare's youngest daughter, was buried there, March 23, 1613-14. Our poet probably was god-father to their son *William*, who was baptized at Stratford, Feb. 5, 1597-8."—Malone.

* "*Anthony Nash* was father of Mr. Thomas Nash, who married our poet's grand-daughter, Elizabeth Hall. He lived, I believe, at Welcombe, where his estate lay ; and was buried at Stratford, Nov. 18, 1622."—Malone.

† "Mr. John Nash died at Stratford, and was buried there, Nov. 10, 1623."—Malone.

‡ John Hemynge died in October, 1630.

§ Burbage died in March, 1619.

|| Cundell died in December, 1627. For accounts of these three celebrated performers, see Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. pp. 228. 232. 245., as drawn up by Mr. Malone.

¶ Susanna Hall, the poet's favourite daughter, died on the 11th of July, 1649, aged 66, and was buried in Stratford church on the 16th of the same month. On her tomb-stone were formerly the following lines preserved by Dugdale :—

" Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,
Wise to salvation was good Mistriss Hall.
Something of Shakspeare was in that, but this
Wholy of him with whom she's now in blisse.

Then, passenger, hast ne're a teare,
To weepe with her that wept with all :
That wept, yet set her selfe to chere
Them up with comforts cordiall.

Her love shall live, her mercy spread,
When thou hast ne're a teare to shed."

the appurtenances, wherein one John Robinson dwelleth, situate, lying, and being, in the Blackfriars in London near the Wardrobe *; and all other my lands, tenements, and hereditaments whatsoever; to have and to hold all and singular the said premises, with their appurtenances, unto the said Susanna Hall, for and during the term of her natural life; and after her decease to the first son of her body lawfully issuing; and to the heirs males of the body of the said first son lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, to the second son of her body lawfully issuing, and to the heirs males of the body of the said second son lawfully issuing; and for default of such heirs, to the third son of the body of the said Susanna lawfully issuing, and to the heirs males of the body of the said third son lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, the same so to be and remain to the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh sons of her body, lawfully issuing one after another, and to the heirs males of the bodies of the said fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh sons lawfully issuing, in such manner as it is before limited to be and remain to the first, second, and third sons of her body, and to their heirs males; and for default of such issue, the said premises to be and remain to my said niece Hall, and the heirs males of her body lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, to my daughter Judith, and the heirs males of her body lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, to the right heirs of me the said William Shakspeare for ever.

Item, I give unto my wife † my second best bed, with the furniture.

Item, I give and bequeath to my said daughter Judith my broad silver gilt bowl. All the rest of my goods, chattels, leases, plate, jewels, and household stuff whatsoever, after my debts and legacies paid, and my funeral expences discharged, I give, devise, and bequeath to my son-in-law, John Hall ‡, gent.

* This messuage or tenement was the house which was mortgaged to Henry Walker.

† The poet's wife died on the 6th of August, 1623, and was buried between her husband's grave and the north wall of the chancel. A brass plate affixed to her tomb-stone exhibits the following inscription:—

“Ubera, tu mater, tu lac vitamq. dedisti,
Væ mihi; pro tanto munere Saxa dabo!
Quam mallet, amoveat lapidem, bonus Angel' ore'
Exeat ut Christi Corpus, imago tua
Sed nil vota valent, venias cito Christe resurget,
Clausula licet tumulo mater, et astra petet.”

‡ John Hall, M.D. died Nov. 25. 1635, aged 60. His grave-stone in Stratford church is thus inscribed:—

and my daughter Susanna his wife, whom I ordain and make executors of this my last will and testament. And I do entreat and appoint the said Thomas Russel, esqr. and Francis Collins, gent. to be overseers hereof. And do revoke all former wills, and publish this to be my last will and testament. In witness whereof I have hereunto put my hand, the day and year first above written. By me,

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

Witness to the publishing hereof,

FRA. COLLYNS.

JULIUS SHAW.

JOHN ROBINSON.

HAMLET SADLER.

ROBERT WHATTCOTT.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London, coram Magistro William Byrde, Legum Doctore, &c. vicessimo secundo die mensis Junii, Anno Domini 1616 ; juramento Johannis Hall unius ex. cui, &c. de bene, &c. jurat. reservata potestate, &c. Susannæ Hall, alt. ex. &c. eam cum venerit, &c. petitur, &c.

“ Hallius hic situs est medica celeberrimus arte,
 Expectans regni guadia læta Dei
 Dignus erat meritis qui Nestora vinceret annis,
 Interis omnes, sed rapit æqua dies ;
 Ne tumulo, quid desit adest fidissima conjux,
 Et vitæ comitem nunc quoq. mortis habet.”

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The Reader is requested to correct the three following ERRATA in the *Index*.

- Vol. II. page 644. col. 1. line 32. For "*As You Like It*," read "*Merry Wives of Windsor*."
— page 667. col. 1. line 52. For "and probably also," read "but not."
— page 676. col. 2. line 46. The following passage, as referring to our great Epic Poet, should have been placed under the article *Milton* instead of *Wotton*: —
"Whether he and Shakspeare were acquainted with each other."

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